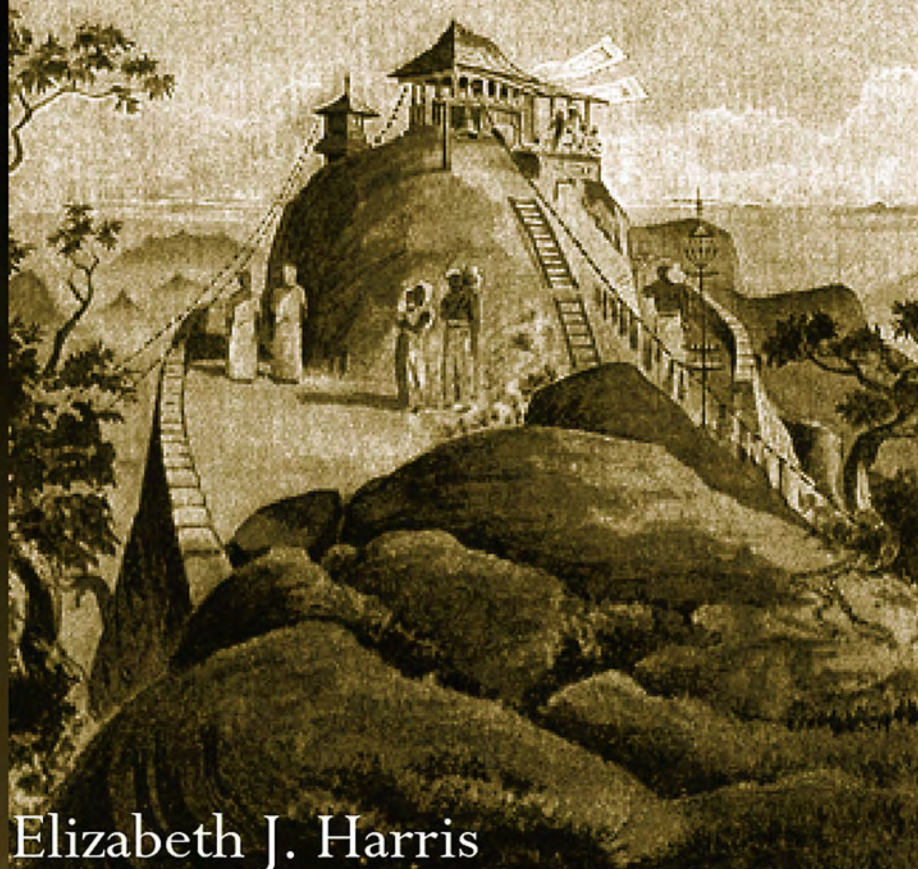

Theravāda Buddhism
and the British Encounter
Religious, missionary and colonial experience
in nineteenth century Sri Lanka
Elizabeth J. Harris

THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM AND THE BRITISH ENCOUNTER

This work explores the British encounter with Buddhism in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka. Its central concern is the way Buddhism was represented and constructed by the British scholars, officials, missionaries, travellers and religious seekers who travelled to the country. The book traces three main historical phases in the encounter from 1796 to 1900 and gives a sensitive and nuanced exegesis of the cultural and political influences that shaped the early British understanding of Buddhism. This work fills a significant gap in scholarship on Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka and its subsequent transmission to the West. Of particular significance is its coverage of how nineteenth-century missionary writings on Buddhism affected both the development of Protestant Buddhism and Christian–Buddhist relations in the twentieth century. Through its thorough exploration of original materials connected with several important pioneer writers on Buddhism, it expands the readers' understanding of interreligious and intercultural relations under colonialism.

Elizabeth J. Harris is an Honorary Lecturer at Birmingham University and Secretary for Inter Faith Relations for the Methodist Church in Britain. A former Research Fellow at Westminster College, Oxford, she is the author of many books and articles on Theravāda Buddhism and Buddhist–Christian encounter.

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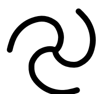
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WITH AFFECTION AND THANKS

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Elizabeth J. Harris
July 2005

ABBREVIATIONS

AS	*Asiatick Researches*
BM	*The Baptist Magazine* (London, Pewtress Brothers)
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
BPS	Buddhist Publication Society (Kandy, Sri Lanka)
BR	*The Buddhist Review*
CCC	*Ceylon Christian Churchman*
CCJ	*Ceylon Church Journal*
CDG	*Ceylon Diocesan Gazette*
CF	*The Ceylon Friend* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo)
CMG	*Church Missionary Gleaner*
CMO	*Church Missionary Outlook*
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CMS Report	*Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society* (London)
JDBUC	*Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon*
JRASCB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* Ceylon Branch (Acting Government Printer, Colombo)
JRASGB	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Great Britain*
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MLR	*Monthly Literary Register* (Colombo)
MM	*The Methodist Magazine* (London)
QL	*Extracts from Quarterly Letters addressed to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by Ministers of the South Ceylon District* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo)
RAS	Royal Asiatic Society (Great Britain)
RASCB	Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
SPG Report	*Report of the Year* (year inserted) *of The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London)
SR	*School Reports for the Methodist Mission* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo)

TB	*The Buddhist* (Colombo)
TCM	Tamil Coolie Mission
TF	*The Friend* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo)
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
WMMS	Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society

INTRODUCTION

> It is a religion such as this, older than Christianity by many centuries, that certain missionary societies seek to subvert by means of agents of imperfect education, married, ordained indeed, but in their regard for their own comfort and for domestic luxury, anything but what a missionary should be. Is it a matter of wonder that they have no success? The Buddhist seeks not to make converts, but he will not be converted – certainly not by men who in education and in self-denial compare unfavourably with the celibate Buddhist monks and with the celibate priests of the Church of Rome.
>
> (Dickson 1889: 25)

So wrote Sir John Frederick Dickson, civil servant in Sri Lanka, Pāli scholar, President of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. His targets were the Christian missionaries who sought conversions through representing Buddhism as nihilistic.

My interest in the British encounter with Buddhism in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka began when I was living in Sri Lanka between 1986 and 1993. I had travelled there to study Buddhism – a mid-career sabbatical. The one year that I had intended, however, expanded to over seven, as I journeyed deeper into academic research. I brought to Sri Lanka an interest in meditation, a concern for social justice and involvement in inter faith relations in Britain. In addition to academic study, during my seven years in the country, I spent time at a Buddhist meditation centre, went on pilgrimage with Buddhist friends, visited *vihāras* as participant/observer and spoke to members of Sri Lanka's minority communities.

As I did this, I met not one but multiple forms of Buddhism and not one reaction to my presence but many. There was Buddhism's public face, seen in the 'spatial shift' identified by Obeyesekere: the bringing of the Buddha out of the temple and into the market place (Obeyesekere 1970: 49). There was a militant face seen in the just war theories woven by Buddhist supporters of a military solution to the country's longstanding ethnic conflict (Harris 2001, 2003). There was the face of devotion and ritual, which privileged the generation of merit over mental culture,

and 'Spirit Religion', which looked to the outside aid of spirits and deities to cope with the presence of evil, economic hardship and bereavement (Kapferer 1983, 1997; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988). Then, there was the 'nibbānic' Buddhism of the group of women meditators I joined, characterized by the belief that *nibbāna* (liberation – the goal of the Buddhist path) is achievable in this life, and the philosophic Buddhism of my Pāli and Abhidhamma teachers. There was also an anti-Christian face, which surfaced in accusations that Christians were involved in 'unethical conversions', and in conspiracy theories that cited as threat to the *dhamma* (the doctrine of the Buddha) Western non-governmental organizations, Christianity and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), then fighting the government in a separatist war.

Through research and conversation, I became aware that a number of these 'faces' had been conditioned by three centuries of colonialism, most particularly by the encounter between Buddhists and evangelical British Christian missionaries. The anti-Christian face carried the most obvious colonial weight. During part of my time in Sri Lanka, for example, I was a staff member of Tulana Research Centre in Kelaniya. The Director was Dr Aloysius Pieris sj, an internationally known indologist. He told me that a Buddhist had once asked him, 'Are you going to be a second Spence Hardy?' Rev. Robert Spence Hardy was a nineteenth-century British Methodist missionary who studied Buddhism in order to undermine it. The fact that Pieris wrote about Buddhism as a Christian made him suspect simply because of colonial precedent. But I discovered that several of the other faces I had met had also been conditioned by colonial encounters. It became necessary for me to probe more deeply, encouraged by people such as Aloysius Pieris. This book is the result. For one key to understanding contemporary Buddhism and Buddhist – Christian relationships in Sri Lanka lies in the colonial period, particularly in how the British who visited Sri Lanka gained their knowledge of Buddhism and used it.

Neither the encounter between the British and Buddhism nor the encounter between the 'West' and the religions of the 'East' were new research topics when I began my research, seventeen years ago. A defining moment had been the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 (Said 1978), which argued that Western representations of Islam, far from being objective, had been conditioned by the power relationships of imperialism and the needs of the West. Further studies had followed, contesting or developing Said's theories. Critically important for my work was Philip Almond's *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, which had aimed to 'show the way in which "Buddhism" was created, and discourse about it determined, by the Victorian culture in which it emerged as an object of discourse' (Almond 1988: 4).

The work of Said and Almond intrigued and challenged me. But one thing was missing – an exploration of the correlation between the Buddhism of the Western imagination, or Islam in the case of Said, and its referent in Asia. It was this correlation that interested me. I was, after all, situated in Asia, learning from Asian Buddhists. I did not contest the ability of imperialism to mould consciousness or

the importance of power relations in the construction of knowledge. However, I was also convinced that agency for religious change and the renegotiating of tradition had to be placed back into the hands of Sri Lankans. What I sought, therefore, was a narrative that would do justice to the Sri Lankans with whom the British related and to the British themselves, as they struggled to make sense of a religion not their own. It seemed to me dangerously myopic to concentrate only on one side of the encounter. The dialogue that happened on the ground was also important, a dialogue that would throw complexity into the generalizations of Said and Almond.

I began my work drawing on Almond and also on those who had made Sri Lanka their particular study such as Ananda Wickremeratne, Ananda Guruge, Kitisiri Malalgoda and Gananath Obeyesekere. I also drew on nineteenth-century sources and translations of earlier Dutch material. In 1993, I was awarded a doctorate on the subject (Harris 1993).

Since 1993, other Western researchers have stressed that the agency of the East should not be forgotten in the examination of Western orientalist constructions of religion. Donald Lopez and J.J. Clarke have taken the broad brush, Lopez in edited collections such as *Curators of the Buddha*, which seeks to redress Said's overlooking of the 'networks of exchanges between the Orientalizer and the Orientalized' (Lopez 1995: 12), and Clarke in his excellent *Oriental Enlightenment* (1997), which argues for reciprocity between East and West. Others such as Charles Hallisey and Ann Blackburn have concentrated on Sri Lanka. Blackburn, probing internal factors within Sri Lankan Buddhism and pan-Asian influences, has argued that it is dangerous to make too irrevocable a distinction between 'West' and 'East', or between what was drawn from the West and from the East in the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism under colonialism (Blackburn 2002a,b). In addition, insights from India have contributed. William Dalrymple, in his meticulously researched historical narrative of the Kirkpatrick family in eighteenth-century India, has blown the discourse open by showing that the line between East and West, at least in the eighteenth century, was far more fluid than postcolonial studies usually admit. The 'Other' could become part of 'Self', and not only at the cognitive level.[1]

In this book, I fuse material from my doctorate with ten years of further research. I include new primary data and my own, ever-developing appreciation of the subject, set in the context of almost annual research visits to Sri Lanka. The result is a historically and contextually dense study that tells a story. Its emphasis is not on 'isms' but people – the witness to Buddhism made by British people who were in face-to-face contact with Buddhists – and not so much on the discovery of Buddhist history as the representation of Buddhist belief and practice.

Some of the British in face-to-face contact with Buddhists sought in-depth discussion about Buddhism; others were far more casual. Some combined conversation with textual study; others ignored text completely. Of the Buddhists with whom they interacted, some welcomed encounter; others shunned it. Key to my argument is that the dynamic of these encounters was conditioned by what

both partners brought to it. While agreeing with Clifford that 'it has become clear that every version of an "other," wherever found, is also the construction of a "self" ' (Clifford and George 1986: 23), I argue for an interactive and reciprocal relationship between Westerner and Eastern Buddhist, and for a radical multiplicity.

Why multiplicity? When writing notes for this introduction, I was at the same time reading four essays written for the new millennium by Bhikkhu Bodhi, a Western Buddhist monk and scholar, then resident in Sri Lanka. These words leapt out at me, 'One of the Buddha's most striking insights is that phenomena do not arise from a single cause but from a complex concurrence of many conditions operating at different levels. Whereas specialist studies deal with problems from within a closed and narrow frame of reference, a Buddhist approach would adopt a comprehensive point of view that takes account of many levels of causation, which criss-cross and overlap, reinforcing each other at various times' (Bodhi 2000: 6). They expressed exactly what I had found when looking at encounters in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka. A multiplicity of witnesses to the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition was offered to the British, and multiple orientalist expressions resulted, offered in turn to Sri Lanka and Europe. To put it simply, there was no single cause for what arose in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka and no single outcome. In asserting this, I have taken strength from historians such as Romila Thapar and theologians such as Michael von Brück, who have insisted that religion is a dynamic category, changing as its adherents interact with that which is 'other'.[2] In addition, although I would not want to argue that a religion such as Buddhism has no essence whatsoever, I agree with Ananda Abeysekara, that what is seen as essential to a religion is contingent (Abeysekara 2002). The religious change that this study explores is contingent on both local and global factors.

In stressing the multiplicity of the orientalist gaze, I also have an ally in J.J. Clarke, who cites historical discontinuities in the West's attitude to Asia, as well as diversity of ends and purposes (Clarke 1997: 10). He suggests, however, that these are linked together through family resemblances that justify the blanket term 'orientalist'. This is where I diverge, unless the term 'family' is used in a creative, contemporary sense that embraces the dysfunctional. The British who came to Sri Lanka all believed that they had a right to explore, define and categorize things Sri Lankan. All, to differing degrees, consciously or unconsciously, bolstered and represented British imperial power. Yet, 'family' relationships were tempestuous and sometimes acrimonious, especially when it came to representing Buddhism or describing the Sinhala people. Each view published became a source for those who followed and touchstone for debate and disagreement. The British were in dialogue with each other as well as with Sri Lanka, and the dialogue was not always polite. Sweetman has made similar points with reference to Hinduism and India in the eighteenth century (Sweetman 2003: 11).

Divergence, for instance, can be seen between missionary and civil servant. Samuel Langdon, Methodist missionary, could declare of a village boy in southern Sri Lanka that he will lead a life of 'ignorance, indolence and sin' (Langdon 1890: 74). John Dickson, civil servant, had claimed only a couple of years earlier that

Buddhism in Sri Lanka leads the people, 'through a life of charity to a peaceful deathbed such as most Christians may envy' (Dickson 1889: 24). Even within one subgroup of the British, there could be multiplicity. Robert Mayor, Anglican missionary, in the 1830s, could say of the Buddhists in the southern town of Baddegama, 'Their carriage is more dignified than that of Europeans and they are naturally intelligent'[3] while his colleague in Kandy, Browning, could declare of children a year later, 'How dark their minds!'.[4] Sometimes such divergence can be seen within one writer. Reginald Copleston, Anglican Bishop of Colombo, claims on one page of his major work that Christians cannot claim, 'the exclusive communication to man of the theory of disinterested kindness and the law of love' (Copleston 1892: 171) and, a few pages later, that giving within Buddhism is entirely selfish (1892: 174). The divergence is even greater when different parts of the century are compared. A host of factors can be enlisted to nuance this multiplicity but none can explain it away.

Shifting the emphasis from 'ism' – orientalism, postcolonialism, imperialism – to person and rooting it in dialogical interaction, therefore, adds complexity, unpredictability and multiple meaning to the 'etic' process of representation and analysis. The danger of placing individual personalities at the centre, however, is that a wider, analytical frame of reference can be lost. Richard King's warning must be taken into account: 'The postcolonial critique of the Orientalist enterprise is not based on a simplistic evaluation of the personal motivations of Indologists to Indian culture' (King 1999: 154). On the other hand, if no attention is given to the differences in approach, temperament, purpose and local context of the people categorized as 'orientalist', and, most significantly, to the differences in what they produced, then the whole task of mounting a postcolonial critique is in danger of failure. A middle way is necessary, combining analysis of one historical context and the players within it, with awareness of a wider, global picture and the patterns of critical theory connected with it.

In defining my method, a middle way was also necessary between two temptations. The first was to see the British contact with Buddhism in the nineteenth century as a linear movement from a less to a more accurate picture of the religion, as the Pāli texts were translated and deeper dialogue with Buddhists sought. Some of my own teachers in Sri Lanka would have been flattered by such an approach. But this would have been to play into the textualization that has been linked with Western appropriations of the 'East' and the idea that religion is static, enshrined in the written. The texts were central to the Sri Lankan tradition before the British 'discovered' them. But those who placed themselves in serious dialogue with Sri Lankan Buddhists at the beginning of the century, without texts to help them, were equally, if not more, in touch with Buddhism as lived tradition than those who privileged the texts.

The second temptation was to privilege these early descriptions too much, as prima facie evidence for Buddhism before the 'Protestant Buddhism' of the later part of the century. Richard Gombrich risks this, when he cites the seventeenth-century writer, Robert Knox, as proof of his view that 'Spirit Religion' was

almost the only form of Buddhism in existence in Sri Lanka at the time (Gombrich 1993: 67). Knox was a perceptive observer of Sri Lankan life and, as prisoner in an independent kingdom, his gaze was not as skewed by the power relationships of imperialism as his successors. Gombrich's point must be taken seriously. Yet, caution is necessary when constructing an objective referent from the words of the British.

My Middle Path places these two 'temptations' in critical tension with each other. Neither is jettisoned; neither is worshipped. I also bring in another element – that the nineteenth century can be broken down into three successive waves of British visitors, who were not only in dialogue with a changing Sri Lanka but with each other and their colonial forerunners. These 'waves' were conditioned by different historical moments and had different flows. The first British visitors drew on the records of the Dutch, their colonial predecessors. Each then produced source material for those who came after, stimulating continuity and discontinuity, endorsement and violent disagreement. The Buddhist sources the British drew on developed in a similar manner, also producing continuity and discontinuity.

The content

The first three parts of the book take in turn my three chronological periods or waves: 1796–1830, 1830–1870 and 1870–1900. They map the shifting contours of the British representation of Buddhism, using in abundance the words of the administrators, casual visitors, members of the military, missionaries and planters who put their new knowledge into writing. Within the first wave, the comparatively small number of writers has allowed me to take them together. Within the remaining two, further subdivisions have been made according to common characteristics at the level of vocational role, the mode of writing chosen or the level of scholarship.

In presenting what my writers discovered or constructed, I have not adopted a consistent formula, since this would have violated the diversity present. Analysis, the 'etic', is kept to a minimum, except in pointing to continuities and discontinuities. I have also restricted myself to writings in English. Except for the missionaries, most of the writers I cover published in English and saw themselves speaking either to Europeans or educated Sri Lankans. An untapped field, therefore, are the Sinhala magazines published by missionary bodies and the comments in Sinhala newspapers on British interpretations of Buddhism. Each of the first three parts is prefaced with a brief historical introduction.

My data in the first three parts is unpublished, with the exception of two sections. An expanded, but not so up-to-date, version of the chapter on Rhys Davids and Copleston was published in Asia in 1997 (Harris 1997a). And the chapter on Allan Bennett has been largely drawn from a monograph published by the Buddhist Publication Society in Sri Lanka (Harris 1998).

Part IV uses the narrative of the first three parts to interrogate what Gananath Obeyesekere has called Protestant Buddhism, the form of Buddhism that arose in

Sri Lanka in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a response to Christian missionary activity. It probes particularly how the construction of Buddhist doctrine that has been linked with Protestant Buddhism arose, particularly the extent of the debt to Western orientalist representations. Drawing on the Sri Lankan sources used by my British writers, I argue that there was no single player, no single cause, and no single relationship in its development. There was one central motif, however, and that was the need to counteract the Christian missionary interpretation of Buddhism. I, therefore, move the focus from the Western 'textual' orientalist to the dynamics of the interaction between Buddhist and Christian missionary, taking forward what I see to be the heart of Obeyesekere's original thesis.

Part V explores the encounter between Buddhists and Christian missionaries throughout the century and how this conditioned religious change. It adds complexity to Malalgoda's view that a clear progression from tolerance to hostility can be seen during the century, but nevertheless argues that the century witnessed a change in Buddhism's attitude to the religious 'other', a change in its theology of religion, to use a christianized phrase. The last section moves into the twentieth century to explore whether these changes in Sri Lankan Buddhism could have contributed either to the ethnic conflict or to ongoing Buddhist–Christian mistrust. Some material from this part has been used in other articles (Harris 1995, 2000) but the present section, because of the new data it includes, supersedes these.

An Epilogue returns to the theme of Western constructions of Buddhism and selects a handful of early-twentieth-century British writers – romantic travellers, Christian missionaries, textual scholars and converts – who inherited and developed the legacies of the nineteenth, smoothing the way for Buddhism to become a Western as well as an Eastern religion.

This study therefore speaks of the meeting between the British and Buddhism in a dialogical situation conditioned by imperial domination. A patchwork with many layers of meaning emerges, a patchwork that still affects Buddhism and Buddhist–Christian relations in Sri Lanka and the West.

In this book, I have used diacritical marks for Pāli and Sanskrit terms and also for the names of members of the monastic Sangha. I have not used them for other proper names, preferring the spelling normatively in use in Sri Lanka.

Part I

1796–1830

1

INTRODUCTION

> The ideas of the common people seem not to extend beyond the incidents of the passing hour; alike unmindful of the past and careless of the future, their life runs on in an easy apathy, but little elevated above mere animal existence.
>
> (James Cordiner, colonial chaplain, Cordiner 1807: 106)

> The Ceylonese are courteous and polite in their demeanour, even to a degree far exceeding their civilisation. In several qualities they are greatly superior to all other Indians who have fallen within the sphere of my observation.
>
> (Robert Percival, army captain, Percival 1803: 170)

Colombo was occupied by the British on 16 February 1796, ending Dutch power. At first, permanency of possession was uncertain. Britain valued the country mainly because of its strategic importance in protecting India and was loathe to spend money on it. Not until 1802 with the Peace of Amiens was Sri Lanka confirmed as a British dependency. By that time, military rule under the East India Company had ended and the first Crown-appointed Governor and Advisory Council were in place.

The British did not control the whole of the island in 1796, but a belt, 'extending, in some places, not more than six, in others thirty, and on the northern side even sixty miles into the interior country' (Cordiner 1807, I: 7). Some British observers in the first 'wave' knew only this 'belt'; others wrote soon after the central, independent Kandyan Kingdom was coerced to accept British rule in 1815.

Between 1796 and 1830, Britain's possession of Sri Lanka was played out against contesting imperial ideals, informed by greed for commercial gain. One influential view is seen in Viscount Lord Valentia. After visiting Sri Lanka in 1803, he accused the Portuguese, whose imperial influence had lasted from 1505 to 1656–1658, of 'intolerant zeal', and the Dutch of wielding an 'ignorant and corrupt' justice system, recommending that the British, in contrast, should cultivate the 'good will of the natives' by 'a just and mild administration, by effectual protection to life and property, and by due respect to their customs and religious

prejudices' (Valentia 1809, I: 29).[1] In other words, the imperial project could not clash with Valentia's imagined English gentleman, characterized by fairness, justice, good manners and uprightness. The Kandyan Convention, which sealed the British takeover of the Kandyan Kingdom, fittingly embodied this model, combining paternalistic benevolence with shrewd pragmatism. The result was that Buddhism found itself protected: 'The religion of Boodhoo, professed by the chiefs and inhabitants of these provinces, is declared inviolable, and its rites, ministers and places of worship are to be maintained and protected.'

Similarly, John Davy, army physician and writer, when speaking of the British role in the Kandy area after a rebellion against British rule in 1818, could write:

> and we shall have much to answer for, both politically and morally, if we do not exert ourselves, and, availing ourselves of the capacity, ameliorate the condition of the people, and improve the state of the country... If these sanguine anticipations be nowise realised, the natives may well rue the day we crossed their mountains, and deplore the time when their old system of government was overturned.
>
> (Davy 1821: 333–4)

When the conviction of cultural superiority, however, was added to this pragmatic paternalism, another ideology could emerge, one that jettisoned respect for local norms and opened the door to both belligerence and arrogance. It found voice in a complex stereotype that attributed indolence, apathy, lack of commercial enterprise and indifference to excellence to the Sri Lankan people. Valentia chose to contest the nascent stereotype, appealing to the effect of Dutch domination when the Sinhala people, 'had no choice but to be poor and idle, or to work for nothing' (Valentia 1809, I: 305). So did the writer who named himself Philalethes. The Sinhala people were hardy, he insisted, capable of enduring fatigue, friendly and humane: 'They are clear in their ideas, and shrewd in their observations....' (Philalethes (a) 1817: 232). Some operated it selectively, crediting the Kandyans, for instance, with much more pride and energy than those in the low country (Percival 1803: 215–16). Others contradicted themselves.[2] But it became a tenacious stereotype, fuelled by the clash between Britain's emerging capitalism and the social values of a semi-feudalistic society. So Thomas Squance, Methodist missionary, can declare in 1816, that one of the reasons for Sri Lankan indolence is, 'when they have wherewith to supply the wants of one day, they will not labour for more till the whole is exhausted' (Squance 1816c: 156).

Sinhala literature was also gathered into this stereotype, although non-specialists must be distinguished from those members of the civil service who learnt Sinhala and had access to Sinhala literary works. Sir Alexander Johnston, for instance, Chief Justice in Sri Lanka from 1811 to 1818 sought to harmonize British law with local traditions.[3] He respected the historical chronicle, the *Mahāvaṃsa*, enough to send a copy to Britain for publication as 'the first

specimen of an original and genuine Buddhist history that has been offered to the public' (Upham 1833, I: vi).[4] And he was not alone.[5] More representative of the majority, though, was John Davy's judgment that the Sinhala people were ignorant of genuine history (Davy 1821: 293), Philalethes' view that Sri Lanka's early annals were 'barren of events' (Philalethes (a) 1817: viii) and Percival's that Sinhala historical sense provided no more than 'wild stories' (Percival 1803: 5).

A romanticism with roots in the eighteenth century was sometimes added to this. 'The state of civilization and modes of life of those Cingalese who have not yet felt the influence of European manners,' Cordiner wrote, 'well accord with the most beautiful pictures that ever have been drawn of rural simplicity flourishing under a genial climate. Their wants are few, and these most easily supplied' (Cordiner 1807, I: 103). But his judgement was the one placed at the beginning of this section!

Missiology and the Evangelical Revival

The last decade of the eighteenth century in Britain saw the birth of autonomous missionary societies, nurtured by the Evangelical Revival.[6] This sounded a death knell for the humanistic openness towards the religions of the East that had been present within Europe in the eighteenth century under the influence of the Enlightenment.[7] In Sri Lanka it led to a sharp division between the children of this revival and Christians who were differently formed. The older, non-evangelical school of British visitors to Sri Lanka justified christianization as moral upliftment, or the civilizing and pacifying of a subject people. In contrast, the evangelical missionary ethic stressed confrontation, the saving of souls and spiritual battle.[8]

Social reform was also important to the Evangelical Revival. The campaign in Britain to abolish the Slave Trade and then slavery itself was the work of evangelicals such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp and James Stephen. The missionaries who came to Sri Lanka were influenced by them. The continued existence of slavery, compulsory labour (*rājakāriya*), caste and discrimination against the Rodiyas, a group of people who fell outside the caste system, leapt out at them as unjust.[9]

The first missionaries to arrive in Sri Lanka were a group of five, sent in 1805 by the Calvinist London Missionary Society. It included M.C. Vos, William Read, J.P.M. Ehrhardt and Johan David Palm.[10] They were followed by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1812, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in 1814, the American Mission Board in 1816 and the Anglican, Church Missionary Society (CMS) in June 1818,[11] the Baptists remaining the smallest missionary grouping.[12] In 1812, the Colombo Auxiliary Bible Society was founded and in 1825, the Colombo Auxiliary Religious Tract Society, both enabling cooperation between the societies.

The clash between the evangelical missionaries and other Christians concerned theology and strategy. The early missionaries arrived with very little knowledge of the religions they would encounter. Some had learnt Dutch. Most had mastered

what they saw as the 'evidences' or arguments for Christianity, knowing they would be speaking to educated people. William Paley's works were foundational,[13] some early missionaries travelling in the conviction that reasoned appeal to Paley's version of the teleological argument would be enough to convert people from atheism or 'idolatry'. For some, this was undergirded by natural theology: the belief that God's existence could be known through reason, without the aid of revelation. These could accept that some 'heathens' had prior knowledge of the divine.[14] It is partly due to this and a theology that stressed the equality of all humans in the sight of God that most missionaries vigorously opposed biogenetic determinism. Thus, the writer of the 1817 Methodist School Report, possibly William Harvard, felt he had to state of Sri Lankan children:

> We have found them as capable of learning as any children in Europe, and attended by an openness and frankness, and retention of memory, which at once invites the teacher to commence his endeavours, and most richly repays him for all his toils in the effect produced by them.
>
> (*School Reports for the Methodist Mission (SR)* 1817: 4)

The bottom line for the evangelical missionaries, however, was that the Sri Lankan people could only be 'saved' through a personal, positive response to Christianity and rejection of previous beliefs. And confrontational tactics were used to achieve this. The Methodist Benjamin Clough, according to his colleague William Harvard, strove to observe as many Buddhist ceremonies as he could to equip himself better to expose the 'absurdity and sinfulness' of Buddhist beliefs, liking particularly to engage priests in debate in the hearing of devotees (Harvard 1823: 234). Squance preached on the 'consequences of sin' and evidently witnessed emotional scenes after sermons that presented human nature as evil and depraved without Christian truth (Squance 1816b: 154).

This can be contrasted to the less evangelical colonial chaplain, George Bissett, possibly the person who wrote under the pseudonym Philalethes (Barrow 1857: 1).[15] Addressing the Fifth Anniversary of the Ceylon Auxiliary Bible Society in 1817, he spoke of christianization but urged the missionary not to dispute with people of other religions or provoke angry debate, but to be mild and forbearing, insisting, 'he will teach as if he taught not, he will neither harshly condemn, nor dogmatically assert, but will present the truth in such an attractive form of *candour* and *moderation*, as will insensibly lead to conviction' (Bissett 1817: 11).

As for Lord Valentia, he made his opposition to the new missionaries quite clear: 'the business of converting would be carried on more safely under the eye of the government, than by missionaries, whose zeal has too frequently outrun their prudence' (Valentia 1809, I: 308).

The other side of the story was that the commitment of the missionaries was often self-sacrificial. Rev. William Ault, Methodist, died after just eight months

work in Batticaloa. Thomas Squance wrote of him:

> He rose at three or four o'clock in the morning, and did not retire before twelve at night; and all his time was employed in reading, writing, instructing children, or preaching. Few men, even in Europe, would be able to endure such labour as this.
>
> (Squance 1816b: 153)

James Chater, the first Baptist missionary, lost two sons and a wife to illness in Sri Lanka before he himself died at sea on his way home. In addition, the methods the missionaries used were not always imprudent. Confrontation was subject to some restraint, as this letter from William Harvard to his parents shows:

> You will not of course understand that we used any kind of violence, – or assumed any kind of superiority or authority over them not even on account of our colour. We frequently take off our Hats when visiting their Temples and always make a point to notice and answer even the minutest parts of their objections against Christianity; we speak to them in a mild tone, and in the most friendly and affectionate carriage in our power: – This we do because Power is no argument, and constrained submission is no conversion, – and I would rather *one* poor ragged obscure Priest bow to the force of the truth and sound reason,–than have 10,000 native Princes acknowledging my . . . religion to be true because I was a white man.
>
> (Archives of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), London, 1816)

Research into Buddhism in Europe and India

In seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, speculative theories about the Buddha had flourished – that he was Noah, Moses, Joshua, a disciple of St Thomas, Siphoas and Sesostris.[16] It was between 1796 and 1830 that speculation gave way to more accurate Western scholarship. In 1814, Antonie-Léonard de Chézy was appointed to the first Sanskrit chair at Collège de France. In 1818, Arthur Schopenhauer, influenced by Hindu literature and the orientalist journal, *Asiatick Researches* (*AS*), made his first specific allusion to Buddhism in *The World as Will and Representation*. In the same year, Alexander Csomo de Köros (1784–1842) left his home in Hungary, eventually to arrive in Tibet, where he did much to open up Tibetan language, religion and culture (C. Allen 2002: 109–14, 194–5). In 1821, Rasmus K. Rask (1787–1832), Danish language scholar, came to Sri Lanka to study Pāli and Sinhala and appropriated a considerable number of religious manuscripts, meeting Methodist missionary and Pāli scholar, Benjamin Clough. At the same time, Brian Houghton Hodgson (1800–1894), a British

official, was shifted from Calcutta to Nepal where he sought out Nepalese 'informants' (Lopez 1995: 4) who could teach him about Buddhism and began to collect Sanskrit Buddhist texts for London and Paris (C. Allen 2002: 106–9, 154–6, 172–3). Eugene Burnouf (1801–1852) was also beginning his work. He was the first to bring Pāli to the attention of Europe. His pioneering *Essai sur le Pali*, written in collaboration with Christian Lassen, appeared in 1826 to be followed by a further publication *Observations Grammaticales sur quelques Passages de l'Essai sur le Pali de Burnouf et Lassen* in 1827 (Guruge 1984: lxxviii). And in 1823, the Royal Asiatic Society was founded in England, mainly by former members of the East India Company, although it was not until 1829 that the first volume of its transactions was published (C. Allen 2002: 136). Only a few of those who achieved academic recognition in Europe for their knowledge of Buddhism, however, actually experienced Buddhism in Asia, and their work largely came after the writers in this section arrived in Sri Lanka.

Pre-nineteenth-century European sources

What, therefore, could those who travelled to Sri Lanka before Burnouf's publications draw on if they wanted information on Buddhism? At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the only comprehensive publication in English was the 1681 account of the 20 years Robert Knox (1641–1720) spent as prisoner in the Kandyan Kingdom between 1660 and 1679 (Knox 1681).[17] Four years later, in 1685, Captain Joao Ribeiro presented his History of Ceylon to the King of Portugal,[18] but there is little evidence that the British read this or other publications from the period of Portuguese influence. The view of De Queyroz, chronicler of the Portuguese in Sri Lanka, that similarities between Christianity and Buddhism could be attributed to the devil, would have passed them by.[19]

Rev. Phillipus Baldaeus (1632–1671) and Rev. Francois Valentijn were the two most significant writers from the Dutch period. Baldaeus came to Sri Lanka as a predikant in 1656 and published an account of his experiences in 1672.[20] An abridged English translation followed in 1703. But, since he worked in the predominantly Hindu North, his comments on Buddhism were neither detailed nor informed. As for Valentijn, an English translation of his work appeared in the second decade of the nineteenth century, but his information on Sri Lanka was not based on first-hand experience.[21]

Much more important as source material was the periodical of The Asiatic Society of Bengal founded in 1784 by Sir William Jones (1746–1794) *Asiatick Researches or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal for Enquiring into the History and the Antiquities, The Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*. In Jones, a product of eighteenth-century humanism, readers were exposed to enthusiasm for India's religious heritage tempered by an arrogant condescension towards the present (Sugirtharajah 2003: 37).[22] The early emphasis of *AS* was Mahāyāna Buddhism, the first volume containing articles on Tibet and the second, Nepal. It was not until 1799 that substantial material about Theravāda

Buddhism was published – *On the Religion and Literature of the Burmas*. Edited and annotated by Dr Francis Buchanan (1762–1829), an employee of the East India Company who was a surgeon and botanist rather than a scholar of religion,[23] it consisted of three treatises obtained from Vicentius Sangermano, an Italian Roman Catholic priest. The first was on Buddhist cosmology, drawn from Burmese writings by Sangermano himself. The second was 'a small treatise written by a late ZARADO or King's confessor with an intention of converting the *Christians*' (Buchanan 1799: 166). The last was a translation of 'the book of ordination'. In 1801, came a work submitted in the 1790s, claiming to be compiled from 'the books of the Singhalais' by a Captain Mahony (Mahony 1801).[24]

If early visitors to Sri Lanka had briefed themselves on this material, they would probably have emerged more confused about Buddhism than when they had started, because of the diversity present. Most sources presented Buddhists as worshipping a Supreme God.[25] But Buchanan (Buchanan 1799: 255) and Mahony did not (Mahony 1801: 35).[26] Ribeiro, Knox, Valentijn and Mahony all agreed that lesser gods were part of Buddhism. Ribeiro and Knox equated the Buddha with one of these, but Ribeiro also gave dates that implied a possible identification with the Christian St Thomas (Ribeiro 1685: 138).

Only Valentijn, Jones and Buchanan (in his editorial comments) affirmed the Buddha's humanity and historicity (Mottau 1983: 29; Buchanan 1799: 257). In a paper printed in 1799, Jones declared:

> As to Buddha, he seems to have been a reformer of the doctrines contained in the *Vedas*; and, though his good nature led him to censure those ancient books, because they enjoined the sacrifice of cattle, yet he is admitted as the ninth *Avatar*, even by the *Brahmans* of *Casi*.
>
> (Jones 1799: 235–6)

He went on to say that because the Buddha belonged to history rather than mythology, the subject of his paper, he would be reserved to another 'dissertation' (Jones 1799: 236). His words reflected the level of exploration already being done by employees of the East India Company into India's religious history. One important question in the late 1790s was whether the Buddha as 'ninth avatar of the Hindoos, be the same with the heretick Buddha, now worshipped in Ceylon, and in the eastern peninsula; as well as in China, Bootan, and Tibet' (Harington 1805: 506).

In Buchanan's compilation, parallel to the Buddha's historicity, was the conviction that the Buddha had been divinized, underscored by the treatise attributed to the *Zarado*, which presented the Buddha as bringing 'salvation to all living beings' (Buchanan 1799: 65). It added, 'Godama is the only true and pure god, who knows the four laws called *Sizza*, and who can bestow *Nieban*' (Buchanan 1799: 267).

Most of these sources claimed Buddhists believed in the transmigration of an immortal soul[27] or, in the case of Knox, in the immortality of the soul and a future

state after death (Knox 1681: 85). It was William Jones who picked up something different:

> they are charged with denying the existence of pure spirit, and with believing nothing absolutely and really to exist but *material substance*: a heavy accusation which ought only to have been made on positive and incontestible proof, especially by the orthodox *Brahmens*, who, as Buddha dissented from their ancestors in regard to *bloody* sacrifices which the *Veda* certainly prescribes, may not unjustly be suspected of low and interested malignity.
>
> (Jones 1807: 165)

Hint of another perspective was also present in Mahony and Sangermano, within Buchanan's compilation. Mahony claimed that, although Buddhism does not speak of created souls, the learned believe there is, 'a breath of life in man' which attaches itself to body after body and is immortal (Mahony 1801: 36). Sangermano alleged that the Burmese believe the soul perishes with the body at death and, 'out of the same materials another being arises, which, according to the good and bad actions of the former life, becomes either a man or an animal or a *Nat* or a *Rupa* etc' (Buchanan 1799: 179).

As for human destiny and how the world was controlled, in Buchanan's work, Sangermano placed good and bad action at the centre, as did the *Zarado* (Buchanan 1799: 270). The same is found in Ribeiro and Knox (Knox 1681: 85; Ribeiro 1685: 139). Yet, both Knox and Buchanan also brought in predetermination or fate. So Knox wrote that, 'They hold that every man's good or bad Fortune was predetermined by God, before he was born' (Knox 1681: 85) and Buchanan, that Buddhists, 'suppose every thing to arise from fate' (Buchanan 1799: 258), probably drawing on Sangermano, who wrote that the destruction and reformation of worlds occurred, 'according to a certain general law, which they call *dammada*, and which may be interpreted fate' (Buchanan 1799: 180). As for Mahony, he wrote, 'They assert a first cause, however, under the vague denomination of *Nature*' (Mahony 1801: 35).

Only Buchanan and Mahony mentioned *nibbāna*. Mahony presented it as a region above the twenty-sixth heaven (Mahony 1801: 36), the resting place of the Buddha rather than the destination of all. Other beings went to the *Triumphant Heavens*, where transmigration ended and happiness was found (Mahony 1801: 33). In Buchanan, *Nieban* was first presented in the words of Sangermano as, 'the most perfect of all states, consisting in a kind of annihilation, in which beings are free from change, misery, death, sickness or old age' (Buchanan 1799: 180). It is linked to seeing 'a god' and hearing his discourses (Buchanan 1799: 224). In the treatise attributed to the *Zarado, nibbāna* is beyond words, a movement from disease to health, gained through morality, in successive transmigrations, which, again, leads to a person becoming worthy of 'beholding a god' and 'hearing his great voice'(Buchanan 1799: 266–71).

Buchanan brokered between the two by commenting:

> Annihilation used in the text by my friend, and in general by the missionaries, when treating on this subject, is a very inaccurate term. *Nieban* implies the being exempted from all the miseries incident to humanity, but by no means annihilation.
>
> (Buchanan 1799: 180)

The Four Noble Truths were itemized by no one. Sangermano merely refers to 'Four laws called Sizza' (Buchanan 1799: 267). Yet, in answer to the question, 'In what consists Bavana?' the *Zarado* replied:

> It consists in thoughtfully pronouncing these three words, *Aneizza, Doccha*, and *Anatta*. By the word *Aneizza* is understood, that he who pronounces it, recollects, that by his particular situation he is liable to vicissitudes: by the word *Docca* is understood, that by the same situation he is liable to misfortune; and by the word *Anatta*, that it is not in his power to exempt himself from being liable to change and to misfortune.
>
> (Buchanan 1799: 272)

It is significant that this comes in a part that reflects an indigenous source.

Buddhist constructions of the cosmos do not feature in the works of Ribeiro, Knox and Valentijn. But Sangermano's treatise focuses on cosmology and is 88 pages long. Buchanan's judgement on it, however, is that the ideas were from *'Hindustan'* and were not, 'the invention of GODAMA, or of those who in his name propagated a new religion' (Buchanan 1799: 194).

There is diversity here about who the Buddha was, the goal of the Buddhist path and the system of transmigration. A few readers might have listened to Mahony's view that Buddhism seemed to be, 'founded in a mild and simple morality. Bhoodha has taken for his principles, Wisdom, Justice and Morality' [a note says that in Sinhalese these are '*Bhoodha, Dermah, Sangeh*' from which principles emanate Ten Commandments . . .] (Mahony 1801: 40).

And some might have internalized Jones' viewpoint, that the Buddha was a reformer of Hinduism, especially if they had read William Ward's text, first published in 1811, which represented Hinduism as a zone of darkness (Sugirtharajah 2003: 74–89).[28]

2

THE EARLY BRITISH VISITORS

Mapping the ground

Joseph Joinville (or de Jonville), Captain Robert Percival, Rev. James Cordiner, Dr John Davy, Rev. William Harvard and his Methodist colleagues, and Edward Upham, the writers I have chosen to represent the first wave of visitors to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth century, cover a variety of roles. Each encountered Buddhism in a different way and with a different agenda. All were pioneers and knew it. They questioned, categorized and evaluated. And they did not come to the same conclusions.

Joseph Joinville arrived in Sri Lanka in 1798 with Governor Frederick North. He was a linguist, cartographer, botanist and artist, and is said to have made the first English translation of a Sinhala text, the fifteenth-century poem *Kokila Sandesaya* (Message of the Kokila – a fictitious bird) just three years after arriving in the country (Peiris 1954: 256).[1] In 1800, he became Surveyor General. The main source for his understanding of Buddhism was textual. But it is obvious from his journals that he seized the travel opportunities his post offered to boost his knowledge of Buddhism and Sinhala through conversations with members of the monastic Sangha.[2] Two things leap out from these records – that he was cordially received by the Sangha and that he tended to trust his own interpretation of textual material more than the words of the Buddhist monks he met (Raven-Hart 1963: 82). In 1801 his 'On the Religion and Manners of the People of Ceylon' was published in *AS,* one of the first accounts written by a civil servant of the British, drawing on an impressive corpus of textual material.[3] Joinville left Sri Lanka in 1805 and nothing more seems to be known of him (Raven-Hart 1963: 73).

Robert Percival was neither a scholar not a 'dialoguer', at least not on the subject of religion, although he visited most of what was then in British hands during his three-year stay from 1797–1800. *An Account of the Island of Ceylon* was published in 1803, dedicated to the King with the aim of illustrating what an important acquisition Sri Lanka was (Percival 1803: 2). His understanding of Buddhism was drawn from Knox and hearsay. George Turnour was later to criticize his statement that, 'the earliest period at which we can look for any authentic information (about the island) is the arrival of the Portuguese under Almeyda in the year 1505' (Percival 1803: 5; Turnour 1833: 219).

James Cordiner (1775–1836), Scotsman and Anglican priest, was summoned to Sri Lanka from Madras by Governor North in 1799, when he was just 24 years old, to be the second chaplain to the garrison in Colombo and principal of all the schools in the island.[4] He left in 1804 to become minister of St Paul's Chapel in Aberdeen (Toussaint 1935b: 71–4). There is no internal evidence in his writings that he gained his information about Buddhism through questioning Buddhists in depth, although, as Joinville, his travels took him to Buddhist temples. His information about Buddhism in his two volume publication of 1807, *A Description of Ceylon* drew from observation, Knox, William Jones, Sinhala historical chronicles such as the *Pūjāvaliya* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*, and 'private memoranda' for his 'own amusement' (Cordiner 1820: 217). In 1820 he published *A Voyage to India*, as a complement to the earlier publication.

John Davy (1790–1868), doctor and scientist, had a thirst for knowledge and a probing intellect. He lived in Sri Lanka in his twenties between 1817 and 1819 as an army surgeon, and doctor to the Governor and his wife, Sir Robert and Lady Brownrigg.[5] To understand Buddhism, he talked to members of the monastic Sangha:

> The account of the Religion of the Singalese, and of the Boodhaical System, which forms the seventh chapter, was collected chiefly in Kandy, in conversations held with the most enlightened and learned of the priests, and after a good deal of laborious enquiry to ascertain truth and avoid error, on a subject particularly liable to misconception.
>
> (Davy 1821: vi)

William Harvard (1790–1857) was a member of the first group of Methodist missionaries to come to Asia under the leadership of Thomas Coke (1747–1815).[6] His agenda was different from Davy's but his method was the same: conversation with the monastic Sangha. So, Benjamin Clough, his missionary colleague, recorded in 1816, 'Mr Harvard and myself have been labouring the last six or eight months to find out, if possible, what the system is, and what the main pillars are that support it [of Buddhism]... We have spent much of our time in conversing, in a quiet way, with the most learned priests we could meet with' (Clough 1816b: 398). *A Narrative of the Establishment and Progress of the Mission to Ceylon and India founded by the Late Rev Thomas Coke under the direction of the Wesleyan-Methodist Conference* was published by Harvard in 1823. My main sources will be this and the letters of Harvard's missionary colleagues.

Edward Upham (1776–1834) is an exception to this study because there is no evidence that he visited Sri Lanka. He was an Exeter-based bookseller, writer and orientalist, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society (RAS). I include him due to his close association with Sir Alexander Johnston and others who had worked in Sri Lanka,[7] and the fact that his account of Buddhism, as committed indologist and speculative philosopher, is absolutely fascinating. His sources were second hand. They included the articles

by Buchanan, Mahony and Joinville in *AS*, and 43 plates relating to the heavens, hells, the gods, the demons and the *Bali*, sent to him by Johnston from Sri Lanka. These form the backbone of his 1829 publication, *The History and Doctrines of Buddhism popularly illustrated with Notices of the Kappooism or Demon Worship and of the Bali or Planetary Incantations of Ceylon*. Johnston also sent him a batch of manuscripts, including portions of three Pāli historical chronicles, *Mahāvaṃsa*, *Rājāratnākarī* and *Rājāvalī*, edited by Upham in 1833.

Both of these publications received criticism, especially by George Turnour in the introduction to his own translation of the first 20 chapters of the *Mahāvaṃsa* in 1836. 'It is scarcely possible for a person, not familiar with the subject, to conceive the extent of the absurdities involved in these and other passages', he declares of Upham's view that the Buddha lived in Sri Lanka (Turnour 1836: xx). Turnour's criticism of Upham was justified but too harsh, as is Allen's, who uncritically quotes Turnour (C. Allen 2002: 162–3). Upham's fault was a tendency to indulge in speculation, but he was not alone in this in the early years, and he was far freer from prejudice than some, inheriting much from the humanism of the eighteenth century.

The Buddha: myth or history

'Who was the Buddha?' Not surprisingly, all these early writers asked this, but the wild speculations of previous centuries did not reappear. All now link the Buddha with Asia and, in varying degrees, with the historical. But uncertainty persisted about when he lived – some echoing William Jones to point to a birth before 1000 BCE (Jones 1788: 143)[8] – and whether he was considered divine.

Percival and Cordiner, the earliest in my group, are happy to draw from Knox that the Buddha was a lesser god, subject to a Supreme Being. Percival plagiarizes (Percival 1803: 198). Cordiner quotes Knox, but only after he has already described the Buddha as a heavenly born mediator between God and man (Cordiner 1807, I: 146). The other writers probe deeper but do not emerge with greater clarity.

Moving to Davy, if he had sought a definite lead from his Kandyan sources on whether the Buddha was human or divine, he did not receive it. In fact, his biography of the Buddha avoids using either term. He begins by declaring that *Bouddou* or *Boodhoo* is a generic term, meaning wisdom. He explains that each *Maha-Kalpe* has a number of Buddhas, each with a similar history. He continues, 'The fourth, or last Boodhoo was Goutama, who is still, with strict Boodhists, the sole object of veneration, and even amongst the people is the chief object of worship' (Davy 1821: 205).

His account of the Buddha's life story reveals careful listening to traditional narratives. All the following are included: an almost infinite number of previous births; residence in the Tusita Heaven; seven steps when born; the encounter with the sage, Kaladiwella; the four sights; renunciation, when '*Sacrea*' donates the requisites of a monk and catches the Buddha's hair; asceticism; enlightenment.

Davy presents the Buddha becoming an ascetic not as part of his search for truth but in order to prove asceticism's uselessness. That the Buddha sincerely experimented with these methods as ways to enlightenment was evidently not acceptable to Davy's sources! The Buddha is also seen as having knowledge of a middle path before he becomes Buddha.

As for the Buddha's enlightenment, Davy describes it as the acquiring of 'every species of wisdom' namely 'the knowledge of his former births and eminent virtues, and those of others; the power of seeing the past and the future; acuteness of wisdom enabling its possessor to penetrate and comprehend every thing; and the power of banishing all worldly passions, and the disposition to enjoy the happiness resulting from that state of exemption' (Davy 1821: 212). And the role of the Buddhas is: 'to reform mankind, and to restore to its purity a religion, which is compared by its followers to a tree, not always in fruit, and sometimes even without leaves or indications of life' (Davy 1821: 205).

Davy explains that the Buddha is worshipped, not in the same way as the gods, but for, 'favour in another state of existence, for advancement in the next life, or for final happiness' (Davy 1821: 227). Yet, he couldn't help slipping into the language of divinity, when writing about the image-filled caves at Dambulla (Davy 1821: 360) and when describing the traditional ceremony that accompanies the placing of eyes in a Buddha image. At its completion, he wrote, 'it is esteemed by all but the priests, as something more, as something divine; and, not till then the artist falls down and worships the work of his own hands as a god' (Davy 1821: 254).

Of those who came out clearly on the side of the Buddha's humanity, Joinville, towards the beginning of his major work, writes, on the evidence of Sinhala manuscripts:

> *Boudhou* is superior to all the gods; he is, however, not what we mean by a god, being inferior to them in some things, and above them in others. He is not purely a spirit, as he has a body: he overruns the different worlds with rapidity, in the same manner as the geniuses of the Arabian Tales, well beloved of *Vishnou* and aided by his power. He governs the bad spirits, who have withdrawn their allegiance from the gods, and who are hurtful to men: yet he is the son of a king, a husband, a father, and a pilgrim. He is eighteen cubits in height, eats rice and vegetables, and has several of the attributes of humanity. He is called SAMAN, *the Saint by* Excellence.
>
> (Joinville 1801: 397–8)

But he then gives his own judgment, 'Whatever may be the opinion of the *Singalese* respecting him, we shall consider him as a man' (Joinville 1801: 398).

In line with this, the brief biographical details he gives are stripped of the miraculous and rooted in the human. The Buddha was the son of a king, 'Soudodene Maha Ragia'. His mother was 'Maha Maya' and he was known as 'Prince Sidharte'. His wife was 'Jassodere Devi' and his son, 'Rahoule'. He became a Buddha after

being six years a 'pilgrim'. Forty five years later he 'became *Nivani*', having established an order to last 5,000 years (Joinville 1801: 414).

At another point, Joinville applied Buddhahood to all Buddhists in a way that owes more to Mahāyāna that to Theravāda Buddhism. He explains that there are three kinds of Buddhas – '*Laoutouras, Passes* and *Arihats*' (Joinville 1801: 411), and continues, 'The state of a *Boudhou* is that to which every being should aspire, because, to become *Nivani*, one must first be a *Boudhou* of one of the three sorts' (Joinville 1801: 412).

Harvard's presentation is the least hesitant. It is the fruit of a clearly defined position. According to Harvard, the Buddha was a historical figure and a religious reformer, who encouraged the people to break away from '*Kappoism*' or demon worship (Harvard 1823: lv). But he continued:

> Budhuism, in its original form, is probably the only system of undisguised Atheism ever promulgated; and presents the curious moral anomaly of the founder of a system (who himself denied a Creator) being at length constituted a god by his own disciples. He who rejected all religious worship, as vain and foolish, has now temples reared to his name, in which he is worshipped: and his image is reverenced as a deity, wherever it is seen.
>
> (Harvard 1823: lvi)

To move to Upham, the picture that arises from his lengthy account again lacks consistency. Towards the end of his work, Upham says the Buddha is not seen as a god but as a teacher (Upham 1829: 113). Yet, throughout his account, he is clearly working with the concepts of divinity and salvation. His main line of thought, drawn from Buchanan, is that the Buddha is an ascetic and hermit, who is recognized by others as having a divine nature and is consequently deified (Upham 1829: 7–8). It is worth quoting the following, which begins by echoing Joinville:

> he is superior to all the gods; he is a worker of miracles, and a muni, or divine teacher; and he conceived and accomplished his idea of becoming a Budha (or an omniscient teacher and saint) in the Manoepeloka, or earth. This sublime act, as they deem it, is the grand excellency of the Budha, as thereby he procured, according to Budhist doctrine, salvation, or Nirwana, for mankind, and hence our earth is termed, in reference to this peculiar and remarkable distinction, *the Ford of Nirwana*, or the road to the supreme state of felicity.
>
> (Upham 1829: 14)

The Buddha appears here as both historical and divine, both sage and saviour. On other pages, he is presented as the giver of *nibbāna* (Upham 1829: 75); the incarnation of divine energy (Upham 1829: 135); the being who is assigned the

sky like Jove (Upham 1829: 43) and the one who is now in *nibbāna*, 'so abstracted in his essence that he is scarcely the object of hope or of fear' (Upham 1829: 135). As for the date of the Buddha, Upham places him 543 years before Christ (Upham 1829: 11).

It is evident that Upham tried to discriminate between history and myth. At one level, he sees the Buddha as a hermit and ascetic, a historical figure. Yet, from his sources he detects that the Buddha has come to fill another role more connected with that of a divine saviour and giver of bliss.

In these early accounts, without exception, the Buddha is linked with divinity but the way this is done varies considerably, from the implication that the Buddha narrative is mythological to the assertion that the Buddha was a human teacher later deified by the people. All the writers also mention miraculous attributes, but again there are differences in the way these are dealt with. Some use them to imply the fictional nature of the tradition. Others attempt to cut through the mythological to find the historical. As for the Buddha's function, he is ascribed both divine and human roles – some assuming he must be a saviour, others hearing from their sources that he was a teacher and reformer.

The sustaining of the universe

Percival and Cordiner, the non-dialoguers, assume, not surprisingly, that the Supreme Being and lesser deities with which they have endowed the Buddhist cosmos take care of the sustenance of that cosmos (Percival 1803: 195, 199; Cordiner 1807: 149). But they are in a minority. Most writers of this period have heard that Buddhism denies a creating or sustaining god. Some state it as fact. Some seize on it as a tool for attack. Others resist it as impossible. Joinville, for instance, contrasts the Brahmins and Buddhists, taking it as fact that the former believed in a Creator and the latter did not (Joinville 1801: 399). His judgement is that Buddhism is, therefore, the more primitive. Davy's approach is similar (Davy 1821: 188). It is the missionaries who seize on the issue as proof of the falseness of the religion. The first question that two Buddhist monks are asked in a service to mark their conversion to Christianity is, 'Do you here publickly profess the Falsehood of the Buddhist Religion, in denying one Supreme Creator and God and attributing all things to chance?'[9]

Upham is the one who resists the idea that Buddhism is atheistic. Although he claims that Buddhism does not intimate, 'any authoritative divine interference' (Upham 1829: 55), he is unwilling to accept it, for that would be to condemn Buddhism in his eyes. First, he uses William Jones' argument that the charge of atheism came from the Brahmins, who were not trustworthy because of their hostility to Buddhism (Upham 1829: 12). Second, he suggests that a distinction can be made between early and late Buddhist writings, the earlier tending 'to weaken the charge preferred against the system of wanting a Supreme Being, or of inculcating the doctrine of annihilation' (Upham 1829: 12). Then, concluding his book, he declares that his own study has convinced him, 'that in Budhism

there is mixed up a germ of intellectual motion, "a seed not swallowed up and lost in the wide womb of uncreated night," which speaks of moral responsibility, and responds to the realities of eternity' (Upham 1829: 136). For Upham, these realities presupposed a supreme being and the immortality of the soul.

What then do these writers posit in place of a creator and sustainer? Again, there is inconsistency. The dominant missionary viewpoint was that chance governed the Buddhist cosmos.[10] 'Fate' is also brought in, 'an uncontrollable fatality' according to Harvard (Harvard 1823: lv). But the missionaries also hear that moral action plays a part as well as the Buddha. So Squance can write, a few sentences away from a mention of chance, 'Boodha, they say, has the management of everything in this world' (Squance 1816c: 157) and Clough, as early as 1816, that Buddhists believe that 'vice, of necessity, punishes itself' (Clough 1816b: 398). Harvard, echoes this in 1823 in the statement that Buddhists believe 'transmigrations' are regulated by moral character (Harvard 1823: 1vi).

Davy and Upham are also inconsistent. Davy hears Buddhists referring to fate when speaking of mundane events (Davy 1821: 188), but what he gathers about Buddhist cosmology inescapably brings in moral action (Davy 1821: 190–202). Similarly, Upham reads in Buchanan that '*Damata*' and fate are the same, but the cosmological material he possesses speaks of a moral order. He seeks coherence by paralleling *Dhamma* and the Buddha, with the Fate and Jupiter of Grecian mythology. 'Fate' in Buddhism, therefore, becomes a personified force that sustains the universe by operating a system of rewards and punishments (Upham 1829: 102). He runs into a problem when explaining how Buddhism approaches the physical laws governing the natural world, since he comes across the belief that rain can be affected by moral obedience (Upham 1829: 85) and that the destruction of worlds can be hastened by immorality. These beliefs do not accord with his speculations concerning the equivalence of *Dhamma* and Fate. A world in which fixed, natural laws governed the physical world and fixed moral laws, human destiny, each presided over by 'Fate', would have been far more satisfactory for him.

Transmigration and the goal of existence: annihilation or peace

Most early writers, except Davy, assume Buddhists believe they have a soul that continues to exist after death. Cordiner questions least the transference of Western categories, referring simply to a future state of rewards and punishments (Cordiner 1807, I: 149). The others speak of transmigration. Joinville declares, 'The *Boudhists* believe that the soul exists from all time; that they are to transmigrate in the course of a time infinitely long, to be determined by their good or bad behaviour' (Joinville 1801: 399). Upham concludes that the very core of Buddhism is 'metempsychosis', 'united to the refined and mystic tenet of the spirit, or influx of divine life, individuated through all forms, which pronounces

all matter to be an illusion' (Upham 1829: 25). At another point, a more material image enters,

> All persons who observe the five commandments of the Budha, transmigrate after death to this region [1st and 2nd heaven] where a body is ready, either of more exalted or degraded condition, according to their past deeds, into which they are *instanter* born again.
>
> (Upham 1829: 66)

In contrast, Davy firmly states that Buddhism is materialistic:

> They appear to be materialists in the strictest sense of the term, and to have no notion of pure spirit or mind. Prane and Hitta, life and intelligence, the most learned of them seem to consider as identical – seated in the heart, radiating from thence to different parts of the body, like heat from a fire – uncreated, without beginning, at least, that they know of – capable of being modified by a variety of circumstances, like the breath in different musical instruments – and like a vapour, capable of passing from one body to another; and, like a flame, liable to be extinguished and totally annihilated.
>
> (Davy 1821: 188–9)

More than the others, he senses that he is dealing with a subtlety, the principle of life as a vapour or flame, which passes from form to form. His words, based on conversations with the monastic Sangha, echo Mahony's translations.

Nibbāna

Only Cordiner fails to mention *nibbāna*. Percival simply projects onto it the Christian concept of heaven (Percival 1803: 201). Among the others, there is a polarization that will echo down the century.

Joinville completes his description of transmigration by saying that, after a period 'infinitely long', the soul ceases to exist (Joinville 1801: 399), describing it as 'the passive happiness to which all *Boudhists* look up to'. Yet a note of inconsistency enters by his use of the term, to 'become *Nivani*', which suggests a positive achievement (Joinville 1801: 399).

Davy invites a similar ambiguity. At one point, he writes that rebirths are 'bounded only by annihilation, which they esteem the acme of happiness' (Davy 1821: 189) but he is far less dogmatic here:

> What this Niwane is, is a religious mystery: priests are rather averse from answering enquiries on the subject; they say, it is forbidden to discuss its nature; and on the principle, that if men understood it, they would not like it, but prefer worldly things, as flies do bad smells.
>
> (Davy 1821: 216)

Davy's implication is that there is a philosophical meaning and a popular one.

Harvard and Clough allow little ambiguity. Clough, while admitting that, 'Their descriptions of *this place* are almost endless' declares that it all amounts to annihilation (Clough 1816b: 399), although his dictionary entry is more positive.[11] Harvard is adamant. *Nibbāna* is: '*The Budhuist heaven* – This word is formed of two Pali words, which signify the utter extinction of all desire; and, to the Singhalese in general, conveys no other idea than that of *annihilation*' (Harvard 1823: lvi).

It is Upham, again, who resists. That *nibbāna* is annihilation, he declares to be false (Upham 1829: 110n). The plurality of his sources, however, hinders him finding an alternative. He is aware that it is linked with meditation, which he interprets as a kind of absorption. So, writing of the Buddha image, he says:

> but the state of Nirwane is indicative of the entire abstraction and repose, which is the end and consummate bliss of Budhism; the eyes closed, and hand and open palm resting perfectly flat, betokening the apathetic calm and absorption of the final rest of the system.
>
> (Upham 1829: 19)

But he finds another, more attractive, picture in Buchanan's compilation:

> The Palee doctrinal books speak of Nirwana as an exemption from old age, from decay, and from death; and as being also the acquirement of bliss. It is defined to be 'as recovery from sickness to health, wherein, if the being, so benefitted, be questioned what it means, one can only say it is the cessation of suffering, and the acquirement of enjoyment gathered even from the contrast'.
>
> (Upham 1829: 75)

He continues to draw from Buchanan, stating that *nibbāna* is gained through beholding a god and hearing his voice (Upham 1829: 75), concluding that this demonstrates vitality within the state of *nibbāna*. He continues, 'Every expression of illusion, disappointment, and pain, is applied to life, and the opposite epithets of unruffled peace, repose, and profound tranquility, ascribed to the envied rewards of Nirwana; expressions carried even to the length of non-existence' (Upham 1829: 75).

Upham's sources imply that *nibbāna* is bestowed by the Buddha, as a gift or reward. Upham adds further that only on earth can it be obtained, because a 'person must see a Budha, and hearken to his discourses and evidences', a thing, Upham gleans, which is only possible in human existence (Upham 1829: 106).

Buddhist constructions of the cosmos: fact or myth

In this period, my writers can be divided into those who see cosmological narratives as irrelevant to Buddhism, those who see them as part of a separate

system of demon worship and those who consider cosmology an item of Buddhist belief or inseparably linked to it. Cordiner and Harvard fall into the first. In contrast, Joinville, Davy and Upham allow cosmology to fill page upon descriptive page. It would be tedious to summarize the material. Mount Meru is placed in the centre of most accounts. From this point, the writers move outwards to describe rocky circles, continents, islands, heaven, hells and the destruction and reformation of worlds. Joinville draws his material from Sinhala manuscripts, Davy from his conversations with the monastic Sangha and Upham from the material sent to him by Johnston.[12]

Joinville and Davy present cosmology as geographical fact within Buddhist belief, although intimations of doctrine creep into Davy's account, for instance, in his reference to the impermanence of the Buddhist universe, 'at the instant of greatest perfection beginning to decline, and at the moment of greatest chaotic ruin beginning to regenerate' (Davy 1821: 189–90).

Sarcasm is the key to Joinville's account. Each world, he explains, has a different geometric pattern. The world of humans is of triangular form, he adds, declaring that the Sinhala people prove they have triangular heads, 'by lines which they trace on their own faces' (Joinville 1801: 408). He continues:

> As we have one day the prospect of being in one or other of these countries, the ladies, who may be shocked at the idea of having triangular faces, have at least the consolation to be able to choose in their next transmigration betwixt square faces, full moons, or half moons.
>
> (Joinville 1801: 408)

Upham's treatment is fundamentally different. Looking beyond the descriptive to cosmology's possible function, he concludes that Buddhism's heavens and hells are designed to illustrate the moral teaching behind 'metempsychosis' and are therefore central to Buddhism. Eight out of ten chapters in his 1829 publication are devoted to cosmology. Each of many heavens are dealt with in turn as 'mansions applied to the progress of man to the state of the gods' (Upham 1829: 74). The same treatment is given to the hells, as a 'probation' for gods and men (Upham 1829: 104), with the crimes and punishments connected with each, itemized.

In addition to believing that Buddhist cosmology illustrated doctrine, Upham was also convinced that it contained keys to Buddhist history, particularly the way Buddhism had dealt with the 'other'. He is particularly fascinated by what he learns about the region of air at Mount Meru's summit, peopled with inferior gods, giants, genii, snakes, great birds and dragons that can change form at will. His theory is this – the Buddha found he could not eradicate belief in the hill-gods or demons of Sri Lanka and so assimilated them into his system, by making them his servants. The stories of this region, he suggests, illustrate this. It is the place where ancient beliefs touch the Buddhist superstructure. Similarly, he speculates that the placing of '*Wassawarty*', in the sixth heaven, as the god who is said to

oppose the Buddha, is a reflection of a fight between Gotama and followers of what Upham presents as an older Buddhism, or an opposing creed (Upham 1829: 70–1). Lastly, in his description of the hells, he presents a class of beings eternally punished, the '*Deitti*' and claims that the sins they are said to have committed represent the heretical views the Buddha tried to overcome such as belief in demons and denial of *nibbāna* (Upham 1829: 110). When placed alongside twentieth-century studies, his theories have a remarkably contemporary ring.[13]

Demon cults

All except Percival distinguish what Westerners had begun to call demon or devil worship from Buddhism. Although Percival differentiates between temples to the Buddha and those to 'inferior gods' (Percival 1803: 203) and realizes that such things as cock sacrifices to ward off disease are connected with the latter, the impression he gives is that everything belongs to one system. And it is the terror connected with demons, rather than their worship, that he stresses (Percival 1803: 199).

Joinville mentions devils but does not emphasize devil worship, beyond saying that the belief that devils harm humans has led to the use of '*Bales*', which, he claims, are prohibited by the Buddha (Joinville 1803: 416). Some of the most interesting points come from Davy. The worship of gods, he claims, is considered quite orthodox as a means of asking for 'immediate blessings' or averting dangers (Davy 1821: 227), although he considers it 'a curious feature' (Davy 1821: 228), which makes the gods 'more feared and more zealously worshipped' than the Buddha. The worship of demons, he continues, the Buddha forbade: the 'more enlightened', he explains, do not approve of it (Davy 1821: 229). The less enlightened are then condemned as ignorant and deluded, and the devil dance dismissed as 'a farce' (Davy 1821: 229).

Upham makes a similar distinction. 'In Ceylon the demon faith is an established system', he declares (Upham 1829: 127), meaning 'worship' of both gods and devils, the beneficent and the maleficent. In line with his cosmological theory, he links both to pre-Buddhist strands of Sri Lankan religiosity, and speculates that all were condemned when the Buddha first visited the island to fight with serpent and demon worshippers (Upham 1829: 114). But the older beliefs were too deep to be eradicated, he suggests, and so the divine snakes and the gods of the hills were assimilated into Buddhism but not the maleficent beings.

The most vociferous condemnation came from the missionaries. Although Squance, writing soon after his arrival, moves from worship of the Buddha to 'adoration' to the devil without commenting on whether the two are compatible (Squance 1816b: 157), Clough, just six months later, declares the temples and 'priests' dedicated to the devils are 'altogether distinct from Budhuism' (Clough 1816b: 399). This then becomes the accepted missionary stance, seen particularly in Harvard's picture of the Buddha as reformer, purging religion from worship of the devil.

This distinction having been made, horror-filled condemnation could begin. And, in contrast to Davy and Upham, the missionaries linked both gods and demons to the devil. In '*Kappooism*', 'The visible kingdom of the Wicked One stands THERE erected, with unblushing front...'Harvard declares (Harvard 1823: l). The fact that the priests of *kapuism* [*kapurāḷas*] are present at the birth of children leads him to assume that the babies are dedicated to the devil and are therefore under the devil's power. It is a strain of writing that gathers momentum as the century progresses.

A further conviction of the early missionaries was that demon cults were stronger than Buddhism (Coplans 1980: 95). Andrew Armour spoke for more than himself when he declared, 'Buddhism of itself is evidently tottering; and were it not in league with devilism, I think that it would soon fall to the ground (Armour 1817: 236).[14]

Buddhist ethics: a praiseworthy appendix

All except Upham relegate ethics to the end of their accounts because of a conviction that belief defined a religion, not practice. Yet, it was to ethics that most praise was given. Harvard, for instance, completely changed his tone when he reached Buddhist morality, claiming that, in this, Buddhism, 'wears an aspect amiable and humane' (Harvard 1823: 1xi), especially when compared to Hinduism. 'The sacred books of this system', he explains, 'forbid cruelty, dishonesty, unchastity, and falsehood; and inculcate kindness, sympathy and subordination in civil society'. Buddhism corrects 'the inveterate prejudices of *caste*; and has even produced institutions of benevolence and mercy in different parts of the island' (Harvard 1823: lxi). Cordiner compares Buddhist precepts to 'the laws of Moses, and the commandments of the gospel', but stresses that they go further since Buddhists 'are prohibited from killing any animal whatever, from the meanest insect up to mankind' and from drinking intoxicants (Cordiner 1807, I: 148), and Davy declares, 'It is certainly highly creditable to the Boodhaical religion, that its morality is so good and uncontaminated with vice and licentiousness' (Davy 1821: 227).

Worth mentioning here is 'Philalethes'[15] and his 1817 publication, *History of Ceylon*. He takes from Valentijn translations of documents showing Sri Lankan moral wisdom but presents them with a spin of his own showing himself a child of the Enlightenment:

> The moral maxims and ancient proverbs of the Singalese, of which I have inserted a respectable collection in the present volume, will interest all descriptions of readers; for they contain truths, of that unvarying and permanent nature, which will touch some chord of sympathy in every breast. Among these proverbial sayings, there are many which penetrate the recesses of the human heart, and address themselves to those common sentiments, which constitute an indissoluble link of

> affinity amongst the scattered members of the human race. They prove that we are all part of one moral scheme, which extends from pole to pole, and from earth to heaven.
>
> (Philalethes (a) 1817: ix)

Just before the translations, he adds:

> But, though men are apt to rush into such a vortex of absurdity in matters of theological speculation, yet it is very pleasing at the same time to know, that, when they reflect on moral rules of conduct and the common duties of life, they all form the same, or nearly the same, opinions, and proceed to the same results.
>
> (Philalethes (a) 1817: 297)

The maxims are drawn from texts 'of the Singalese and Malabars' (Philalethes (a) 1817: 297).[16] Qualities such as perseverance, the doing of good, honesty, the love of justice and reverence to God are stressed. It is telling that at the same time he can speak of Buddhists as 'idolatrous heathens' (Philalethes (a) 1817: 322).

For Upham, ethics lay at the very centre of Buddhism. This is why he stresses that the pictures of hells in the temples are moral teachers and why he isolates the *Jātaka* as 'the chief book among the Buddhists' (Upham 1829: 33), demonstrating the qualities of purity, compassion and wisdom developed by the Buddha. And, as a man with a social conscience, he chooses to mention *Jātaka* that speak of tyranny being overthrown or converted to good.[17] The *Vessantara Jātaka*, in which the Buddha-to-be masters non-clinging through giving away his family, however, causes him difficulty, since he glimpses that the destruction of attachment might be valued and recoils (Upham 1829: 36–8).

Judgement

A Buddhism in decline

That Sri Lankan Buddhism lacks vitality is a frequent early judgment, especially from those committed to christianization. Cordiner, for instance, claims that 'the ancient form of worship is almost totally forgotten', the inhabitants living 'in uninstructed ignorance, perfectly free both from prejudice and bigotry' (Cordiner 1807, I: 164). Harvard offers an interesting qualification, 'With the exception of females, and those who support Budhuism from interested motives, the generality of the people manifest great indifference to every system of religion' (Harvard 1823: lx). His point is similar to Cordiner's, but it is significant that he points to 'indifference' rather than 'ignorance'.[18]

Percival and Davy are the ones who contest this. Percival draws attention to the strong hold members of the monastic Sangha have over the laity (Percival 1803: 201) and gives no hint that Buddhism is waning. Most of Davy's account also implies that Buddhism is vibrant. Buddhist ceremonies move him emotionally

(Davy 1821: 471) and he is full of praise for the organization of the monastic Sangha (Davy 1821: 225). Yet, when speaking of the religious observances on *Poya* Days [Quarter days of the moon], another tone enters:

> The day should be kept like our sabbath, and devoted to religion and rest from labour; but it is not:- indeed, so little attention is paid by the people to a pohoya, that unless one were told of it, one would not suppose that they were acquainted even with the term.
>
> (Davy 1821: 223)

Rational and irrational; reason and revelation

Are Buddhist doctrines compatible with reason and science? The answer for these writers was often 'No'. At the very beginning of his chapter on Buddhism, Davy states:

> This is not a rational system, nor do its followers attempt to support it by reason; if you ask a reason for any assertion, you may receive in answer a dogma in Sanscrit or Pali verse; if you are not satisfied, you may be amused with an allegory; and if you still persist and urge explanation, the Boodhist will take refuge in the mysteries of his religion, and in our very limited capacities to attain knowledge, and comprehend what is divine.
>
> (Davy 1821: 189)

He regrets later, 'that such a system of morality should be associated with such a monstrous system of religion – a compound of the coldest materialism, and the grossest superstition, offering nothing consolatory, or intellectual, or dignifying, or rational' (Davy 1821: 227).

The early Methodist missionaries expressed a similar frustration about gaining information. Squance sweepingly declares that no two 'priests' can be found in the island who agree (Squance 1816a: 39). Clough states that when he and Harvard had enquired about the genealogy of temple images, the monks had carried them, 'through such labyrinths of confusion and nonsense, that we are sometimes ready to despair of effectually succeeding' (Clough 1816b: 398; Coplans 1980: 34). Contrasting Buddhism with what they believed to be the divine, revealed rationality of Christianity, they found Buddhism wanting in both revelation and rationality.

Not all writers at this time, however, deny rationality to Buddhism. Philalethes, for instance, although seeing the Buddha biography as fictional and inconsistent, had no problem with judging Buddhist ethical wisdom rational (Philalethes (a) 1817: 297). Upham, while discovering much that he judged absurd (Upham 1829: 297), attributed high reasoning powers to Buddhists, although he implied that reason without revelation could be misleading (Upham 1829: 135).

In Dr Adam Clarke (*c*.1760–1832),[19] a respected Irish Methodist, academic and preacher, a similar juxtaposition can be found, conditioned by close contact with two members of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha, who were put under his care after they sailed to England in 1818 on the pretext that they wanted to convert. In a letter to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, he wrote:

> These men cannot be treated as *common heathens*; they are both *Philosophers* – men of profound erudition in their way; with as far as I can judge, a powerful command of Eloquence. They are deeply read in the most speculative, most refined and purest ethics of the brahman and Budhoo systems. In these respects their acquirements are immense.
>
> (Ceylon Box 1, Adam Clarke (WMMS Archives))

Clarke was convinced that the priests possessed a 'false theology and philosophy'. But this was not through a lack of reason but a lack of revelation. Clarke goes further than Upham in ascribing keen intellect and erudite philosophical understanding to the Buddhist monks, challenging contemporary constructions of the word 'heathen'.[20]

Clarke drew up a set of Christian principles for the monks, published in 1820. These affirmed that the Holy Spirit was present in the hearts of all people, teaching them the principles of right and wrong, and it led to the following, 'Those who have acted conscientiously, according to the dictates of this heavenly light in their minds, shall not perish eternally; but have that measure of glory and happiness suited to their state' (Taggart 1986: 91), an inclusivist stance rooted in natural theology, reinforced perhaps by his dialogue with the two monks.

Concluding remarks

These early writers, drawing from eighteenth-century precedents, dialogue, observation and, for Upham and Joinville, textual sources, set the scene for future observers of Buddhism. Most of the perspectives that appeared later in the nineteenth century can be glimpsed in the earlier years. The dominant view of *nibbāna* was nihilistic, with one dissenting voice in Upham. Most stressed Buddhism's irrationality, but Clarke, in his discussions with two Buddhist monks, saw, but could not sympathize with, Buddhism's rationality. Almost all saw Buddhism as affirming transmigration of the soul, but Davy glimpsed that the soul in Buddhism was changeable and fragile. Many deduced that the Buddha belonged to fiction or myth because of the supernatural elements in his biography, but Harvard and Joinville cut through this to seek the Buddha's historical role. Buddhist morality was elevated above that of Hinduism, probably drawing on missionary writings in India, but Hindu categories are rarely projected onto Buddhism. The writers that followed took up these lines of thought. They accepted, rejected and modified, creating patterns of continuity and ruption.

Part II

1830–1870

3

INTRODUCTION

By 1830, Sri Lanka was an established and unified British possession. A network of roads built under the *rājakāriya* system of forced labour was about to link the old Kandyan Kingdom with the coastal provinces. The road between Colombo and Kandy was fully bridged and completed by 1832. Governance was on the verge of being liberalized through the 1833 Colebrooke–Cameron reforms, which put in place an Executive and Legislative Council to replace the old Advisory Council, and an administrative structure that brought the country under a unified system of provincial units. *Rājakāriya* was abolished in the same year, and, in 1844, slavery.[1] State control of education was also increasing, through a Central School Commission.

In the economic sphere, the most visible development was plantation agriculture. Indigo, cotton and sugar were tried but, by the 1840s, coffee emerged as the most successful crop and the Central Province, as the main location for it. Land, appropriated by the Crown, was sold at low price to investors and, by 1846, there were between five and six hundred plantations (K.M. de Silva 1981: 269). Although a slump brought the industry to its knees in the mid-1840s, recovery followed. Since Sinhala people were unwilling to work for the British on what had been their own land, labour came from India, at first seasonal and migrant. Few British people at this time wrote of the high mortality rate among those who made the journey or of the living conditions they endured on arrival.[2] But then wealth creation in Britain was by this time characterized by sweated labour and the growth of urban slums.

The British who came to Sri Lanka in these middle years talked less about potential and more about achievement. Most believed that Sri Lanka had benefited from colonial rule and that the Kandy District had been liberated from oppression.[3] In the early decades of the century, the concept of Britain as civilization-bearer had been in its infancy. In the middle decades, it strengthened, linked as before with indicators such as justice and benevolence, but now, more belligerently shot through with the idea of providential ordination. The first Bishop of Colombo, James Chapman, for instance, could write:

> It cannot be that all this, by the Providence of God, has been committed to England beyond every nation of the world, but for *some great purpose*

> *of His own* – not merely that, amid the wonder of subject nations, we may thread their vast territories with our iron roads or electric wires; or even that by the incorruptible administration of a benign jurisprudence, we may exhibit before them the high standard of British character, the pure model of British law, order, and justice between man and man, without distinction of race, or colour, or nation, or caste.
>
> (Chapman 1892: 214)

This appeal to God-given vocation threatened what had been left of Enlightenment humanism in the earlier years, by directing the concept of moral duty along a more restricted channel: christianization. It also nurtured a hardening of attitudes towards Buddhism, and indeed all that was 'other' in terms of religion and culture. Acrimonious exchanges began between missionaries and government over the latter's continued patronage of Buddhism.

In the middle decades, journalistic, literary and scholarly activity leapt forward (Karunatilake 1989: 51–61). The first English newspaper, *The Ceylon Observer*, appeared in the 1830s, to be followed by several others, including *The Ceylon Chronicle* and *The Examiner*, which came under Sri Lankan management in 1859. Parallel to this were new Christian periodicals, for example, *The Friend (TF)*, edited by Methodist missionary, Rev. Robert Spence Hardy. To cater to literary tastes, John Capper began the *Ceylon Magazine* and, in 1850, *Young Ceylon* appeared, published by a group of Sri Lankans, mainly Burgher. The greatest stimulus to scholarly research, however, was the founding of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (RASCB) in 1845 as successor to the Colombo Literary Society.[4] The first edition of its journal contained articles by Daniel Gogerly on Buddhism, William Knighton on Sri Lankan literature, J.V. MacVicar on the Sinhala alphabet and Casie Chitty on ancient coins.

The formation of the RASCB was both a product of, and impetus to, a growing awareness among the British resident in Sri Lanka that the country had a rich historical heritage. Sri Lanka's historical chronicles had not been unknown in the early period. Joinville worked with some. Johnston sent many to Upham. But both belonged to a civil service elite. In this period, the fruits of scholarship spread and earlier writings, those of Percival and Philalethes, for instance, were condemned as uninformed. George Turnour (1799–1843), born of a civil servant in Sri Lanka and himself a civil servant, was key to this. Having mastered both Pāli and Sinhala, he presented to the *Ceylon Almanac* of 1833, 'a statement containing an uninterrupted Sri Lankan historical record of nearly twenty four centuries' drawing from the *Mahāvaṃsa* and Sinhala historical chronicles such as the *Pūjāvaliya*, the *Rājavaliya* and the *Rājaratnākariya* (Turnour 1833). It was followed by a publication that attacked his orientalist predecessors mercilessly.[5] The year 1833 was also when Edward Upham's translations were published including sections from the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Most informed writers after 1833 could not ignore this research.

Awareness of Sri Lanka's history, filtered through indigenous chronicles, led some writers towards romanticism. As Gooneratne has succinctly argued, this

romanticism was often linked with a sense of possession and a lack of accountability that led to self-indulgent, self-created emotion (Gooneratne 1968: 68). But it could also result in curiosity for the factual, as in the cases of Jonathon Forbes and Lucinda Darby Griffith of this study. It was not the wide sweep of open, powerful and uncharted countryside that tantalized Darby Griffith's senses but more minute natural manifestations – a plant, an insect, an animal. A response less connected with power and control can be glimpsed. The contesters of these romantic constructions were the missionaries and some specialist scholars and colonial administrators.

Romantic praise for Sri Lanka's past, however, was often coupled with a Jonesian dismissal of the present, reinforcing the indolence stereotype. Samuel Baker, memoir writer, could become lyrical about past ages when the land was studded with 'lofty Dagobas' (Baker 1855: 70) and Polonnaruwa was laid out, 'with a degree of taste which would have done credit to our modern towns' (Baker 1855: 71). But the present inhabitants are judged an 'indolent and degraded race' in linear development from the early years (Baker 1855: 357). Some writers added to this condemnation of a perceived effeminacy in Sri Lankan men because of their long hair and slim bodies. In Edward Sullivan, from the Indian Civil Service, this produced an almost obsessive horror:

> When watching those mincing conceited creatures sitting in groups, combing and anointing their long, black hair, I have felt infinitely more disgust at their occupation, than I ever experienced in viewing the amicable phrenological investigations mutually exchanged by Italian beggars at Naples and elsewhere.
>
> (Sullivan 1854: 21)

His conclusion was that the whole culture lacked masculine strength and, by implication, moral fibre. His views, although representing an extreme of colonial arrogance and offensiveness, were not exceptional.[6]

The ongoing strength of the indolence stereotype is shown by the contradictions it generated. Lucinda Darby Griffith struggled with divergent indicators in one sentence, 'The inhabitants of Galle are far more industrious or rather more ingenious and skilful than those of most other towns in Ceylon for they are all indolent and careless of employment. But what they attempt they do well' (Darby Griffith 1842, IV: 96).

William Bridgenell, Methodist missionary, in an article entitled *National Characteristics*, declared, 'I have heard them [the Sinhalese] characterised as a nation of cowards, drones, and ingrates; but surely the assertion was no display either of justice, or of wisdom, or of kindness, or of truth' (Bridgenell 1838: 49). To back his claim, he argued that the Sinhala people showed, 'fortitude, patience, cool daring, and recklessness of life'. But he could nevertheless claim in the very next sentence that the most marked characteristic of the Sinhalese was 'contentedness with competency'. In general, however, missionaries continued to stress

that Sri Lankan young people could match the ability of English students, challenging the racist generalizations of some of their contemporaries.

Missiology

As information about Buddhism and Hinduism reached Europe, some Christian theologians at this time began to take the non-Abrahamic religions seriously. A significant but controversial figure was Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872). As Professor of Theology at King's College, London, he gave the Boyle Lectures in 1846 on 'The Religions of the World', unequivocally claiming in them that all the world's religions had been used by God and that Christians could learn from them. He presented Islam as having a radical awareness of the greatness of God, Hinduism as a religion that asked some of the greatest questions about life and death and Buddhism as a system that recognized that a divine power may reside in human beings (Cracknell 1995: 41–4). Maurice neither minimized differences between religions nor let go of belief in Christian superiority, but he continually stressed that the Christian attitude to other religions should be one of deepest sympathy.

In Sri Lanka, the influence of thinkers such as Maurice can be seen most strongly in non-missionaries. The missionaries further hardened their attitude towards Buddhism. Some accepted that moral worth could exist outside the Christian religion, but very few believed this had any relevance to what was for them the central existential issue: whether or not a person was saved from the inherited human birthright of sin. The Anglican James Selkirk, for instance, records without question that a cholera epidemic in Jaffna, 'swept away hundreds and thousands of the wretched inhabitants into an awful eternity' (Selkirk 1844: 304). Yet, there are hints that some missionaries were learning that direct attacks on Buddhism were counterproductive.

Key to the middle years of the century was the influence of evangelical Christian perspectives over the Colonial Office. In the early decades of the century, London had encouraged a politically expedient respect for Buddhism. By 1830, the rhetoric had changed: the religions and cultures of the East were to be judged worthless. K.M. de Silva cites a dispatch sent in October 1837 by Glenelg, Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, to Stewart Mackenzie, Governor of Sri Lanka between 1837 and 1841, laying down that the spread of Christianity should be a vital aspect of colonial policy.[7] Mackenzie did not oppose this (Beven 1946: 49), but the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka did, so he turned towards the Baptists and Methodists, increasing sectarian tension, since many senior civil servants were High Church Anglicans.

One result of this was that the missionaries seized their opportunity to challenge what they saw as systemic administrative failures in the area of religion. Rev. Robert Spence Hardy's booklet of 1839, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon*, was a classic example (Spence Hardy 1839). Even Mackenzie thought it went too far. But James Stephen of the Colonial Office gave it an almost fanatical support (K.M. de Silva 1965: 73–6). Stephen's influence can be

seen in an 1844 dispatch from the Secretary of State to Governor Sir Colin Campbell ordering him to sever connections between the state and Buddhism (K.M. de Silva 1965: 83). Officials in Colombo, however, were reluctant to implement this. Violent disturbances in 1848 in Colombo, Matale and Kurunegala (K.M. de Silva 1981: 277–81) confirmed their stance. But controversy continued. The administration of temple lands was still a burning issue at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the main reason for this was a missionary lobby that had been given a taste of power.

Training the British

Training for missionaries in this period remained rooted in theology, biblical studies and classics. Although some educators realized that a missionary strategy reliant on condemnation of 'the other' and the 'Evidences' of Christianity was not good enough (e.g. Spence Hardy 1842: 183),[8] the study of other religions was rarely a formal component of training.

Developments in the training and recruiting of civil servants was marked by a struggle over privilege. Although the Colebrooke–Cameron Reforms attempted to reform the civil service by opening it up to competition, reducing salaries and changing pension arrangements, much of this was reversed under pressure from civil servants (K.M. de Silva 1981: 319). Throughout the middle period, civil servants remained well-paid, drawn from a privileged upper class, trained on the job and often dependent on interpreters. Even when a competitive exam was introduced in 1856, it was for candidates nominated by the Secretary of State. It was only in 1880 that this nominations system was abolished and open competition was allowed (Toussaint 1935a: 17).

Scholarly research into Buddhism in Europe and India

By 1830, Buddhism had a secure place on the curriculum of European universities. Eugene Burnouf was the acknowledged master of Sanskrit and Pāli, succeeding to the Sanskrit chair at the Collège de France in 1833. His *Introduction á l'Histoire du Buddhisme indien* appeared in 1844. His death in 1852, however, cut short his hope to synthesize Pāli and Sanskrit accounts. In 1844, Schopenhauer, in the second edition of *The World as Will and Representation*, declared more forcibly that Buddhism came closest to what he saw as truth, having read works by I.J. Schmidt (translations from Tibetan), Foucaux, Upham, Turner, Spence Hardy and Burnouf. Nietsche and Wagner were influenced by him (Nanajivako 1970: 24; Dumoulin 1981; Clarke 1997: 74–84).

In 1845, Frederich Spiegel published *Anecdota Palica* containing a German translation of the *Uraga Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. It was one of the first canonical translations from Pāli to be published in the West, although Daniel Gogerly forestalled him in Sri Lanka. More significant than Spiegel's translation, however,

was Michael Viggo Fausböll's (1824–1908) edition of the Pāli *Dhammapada* with Latin translation, published in 1855. His largest work was to be a translation of the *Jātaka*, begun during this period, drawing on manuscripts from the Rask Collection and the advice of the venerable Vaskaḍuvē Subhūti in Sri Lanka.

Other notable European scholars of Buddhism at this time included Albrecht Weber, the first to publish the *Dhammapada* in the West in a living European language, in 1860 in German; Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, chair of Greek and Latin Philosophy at Collége de France, who, in 1860, published the influential *Le Bouddha et Sa Religion*; Philippe Edouard Foucaux, a specialist in Tibetan studies and a contester of Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire's negative conclusions and Max Muller (1823–1900). Muller was to become one of the greatest nineteenth-century Western indologists. Matriculating from Leipzig University in 1841, he began to study Sanskrit almost immediately afterwards, followed by Pāli, Hindi and Persian. Under the influence of Burnouf, he studied the Vedas. Oxford became his home after 1846 and Vedanta, his principal area of study. However, his contribution to Buddhist studies was also considerable. As in earlier years, scholars of Buddhism based in Europe had little direct experience of Buddhism in Asia.

In India, members of the East India Company were piecing together the origins of Buddhism through archaeological exploration. By 1836, it was established beyond doubt that the Buddha was an Indian and, in the years following, the identity of King Asoka was established.[9]

The years from 1830 to 1870, therefore, were crucial years, both for Sri Lanka and Western indological study. However, by 1870, the number of translated Pāli texts available in Europe was still low. The only complete section of the *Tipiṭaka* available was the *Dhammapada*, and little had been published by Asian Buddhists in a form accessible to the West. In Sri Lanka, however, a significant compendium of Buddhist doctrine appeared in the *Ceylon Almanac* of 1835. It was by the venerable Kitulgama Devamitta of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha, translated by civil servant John Armour from a Sinhala manuscript written for Sir Simon Sawers.

Method

In this period, I draw a clear distinction between specialists and non-specialists. Rev. Robert Spence Hardy and Rev. Daniel Gogerly fall into the first. George Turnour does too, but I have chosen to omit him because his priority was not the doctrine of Buddhism but texts that would help him build a reliable history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and India. Evidence suggests that this vocational choice arose through a conviction that scholars such as Kitulgama Devamitta were better equipped to explain Buddhist teaching than 'any orientalist of a different faith',[10] for he was certainly well-acquainted with the *Tipiṭaka*. His five presentations to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, published between 1837 and 1839, for instance, offered historical material from the *Buddhavaṃsa*, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*, and many canonical texts, including the

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. His death at the age of 43 meant that his monumental translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* was not completed.

I have divided the category of the non-specialist into three: non-scholarly memoir writers; Protestant missionaries and their colleagues and scholarly non-specialists. The first is a diverse group ranging from civil servant to casual aristocratic visitors. Among the scholarly non-specialists are Jonathon Forbes and William Knighton, contesters par excellence of their contemporaries. Both became touchstones for the next chronological period.

4

THE ARROGANCE OF POWER

The memoir writers

Memoir writers need be accountable to no one but themselves. In the writings of those I have chosen, hearsay mingles with observation of Buddhism and conversation mediated through less than proficient translators. Not one specialized in Buddhism, although all claimed the right to comment on it. Yet, they are important to this study. Memoirs were far more influential in England than scholarly treatises. They fuelled popular buddhological speculation and bolstered the imperial project.

I have chosen seven main writers, two of whom visited Sri Lanka within my first wave but published in the second. John Whitchurch Bennett arrived in Sri Lanka as a civil servant in 1816 and filled various posts in the Southern Province. He was fired by the government in 1827, accused of financial mismanagement. His book, *Ceylon and its Capabilities*, was published in 1843, and was directed at potential emigrants. Lieutenant-Colonel James Campbell, already an experienced soldier when he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1819, was first appointed Commandant of Galle. Ill-health forced him to leave the island in 1823. *Excursions, Adventures, and Field Sports in Ceylon* was also published in 1843. Lieutenant De Butts served in Sri Lanka well over a decade after Campbell, between 1836 and the end of 1839. His memoirs, *Rambles in Ceylon*, were published soon afterwards, in 1841.

Lucinda Darby Griffith came to Sri Lanka with her husband, George, a member of the military. From her first day, 16 March 1841, she wrote a diary. Four volumes were completed, illustrated with her husband's watercolours. They were never published. Lucinda's health was poor and, in May 1844, a hurried departure was necessary. *A Journey Across the Desert from Ceylon to Marseilles*, published in 1845, a similar joint effort between husband and wife, gives details of this. Her diary was one of the things that had to be left behind.

Lucinda's dialogue partners were her Sinhala house staff and other expatriates including missionaries. Her observation was keen and, unlike some of her male contemporaries, she was willing to question her preconceptions. Having been in Sri Lanka less than a month, she writes, 'I should have formerly laughed at the idea of a handsome black man but I am convinced there is quite as much beauty to be found amongst the Cingalese as in our own proud nation' (Darby Griffith 1842, I: 80).

Henry Edward Sullivan (b. 1830) was an aristocrat who entered the Indian Civil Service in 1850. In *The Bungalow and the Tent or A Visit to Ceylon*, published in 1854, he compares Sri Lanka with Africa, Galle with Aden, and Italians with the Sinhala people. Extreme arrogance and condescension towards non-European cultures colour his writings. Yet he remained in Asia longer than many others in this volume. He was still in India from 1881 to 1886, when he served as Member of Council of the Governor of Madras. Robert Binning was also a member of the Indian Civil Service. Ill-health forced him to leave in 1850. He then travelled and the result was *A Journal of Two Years Travel in Persia, Ceylon, etc.* published in 1857.

Lastly, Sir Samuel Baker (1821–1893) lived in Sri Lanka between 1847 and 1855, as an independent settler. He bought land in Nuwara Eliya and established a small farming colony, equipped from England. Fired with absolute faith in the benevolence of the British Empire, he sought to encourage prospective settlers. However, it was only after leaving Sri Lanka that his imperial interests brought him fame.[1] He was a controversial figure. His statement, for instance, that the brains of negroes did not grow after the age of 14 drew considerable anger from missionaries. He wrote two books on Sri Lanka: *The Rifle and the Hound* (1853) and *Eight Years Wanderings in Ceylon* (1855).

First points about Buddhism: avatars, idols and decline

Comments about Buddhism occur randomly in these writers. But there is always a first point or an idea that penetrates the whole and I start with these. Bennett, straddling my first and second 'wave', made sure the Knoxian picture of the Buddha as a god persisted into the 1840s (Bennett 1843: 337, 339). But this is now reinforced by the view from India that the Buddha is the ninth incarnation of Vishnu (Bennett 1843: 339).

Campbell and De Butts, in their first points, also equate Buddhism, in different ways, with theism. Campbell, attributing his data to a conversation held with members of the monastic Sangha at Dambulla, reports:

> They, of course, spoke highly of the Boodhoo religion, and in admiration of its mild and excellent precepts. They admitted that there are devils, whom they teach the people to worship, or rather to dread and propitiate; but that there is one Supreme God, who formed the earth and the sky – perhaps, a triune God, whom I was inclined to think they adore in Visnu, Saman and Nata [gods within the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon].
>
> (Campbell 1843, II: 183–4)

De Butts first speaks of Buddhism when glowingly describing the former political power of the monastic Sangha in Kandy (De Butts 1841: 129). He then refers to 'Boodhoo' as 'the tutelar deity of the island' and lists three doctrinal points, the first of which, in contrast to Campbell, is the denial of an eternal and almighty being (De Butts 1841: 130–1).

Darby Griffith's views about Buddhism changed as her stay lengthened. However, when she comments on the doctrine of Buddhism in Volume III, she begins:

> The Buddhist religion is supposed to be a branch of the Brahminical faith which it resembles in many respects and by Hindoo writers Buddha is said to be the ninth incarnation of Vishnu – the God of Preservation, but this is denied by the Buddhists, who assert their religion to be more ancient than that of Brahmah.
>
> (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 57)

She goes on to say that Buddhists do not believe that the world was originally created, but rather that it was destroyed and reproduced many times, each world governed by a different Buddha (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 57).

To move to those who published in the next decade, Sullivan's first attempt at Buddhist doctrine comes when he mentions Lord Torrington's decision to execute a Kandyan Buddhist monk after the disturbances of 1848. This leads him to call Sri Lanka the 'Holy Land of the Buddhist' (Sullivan 1854: 61). He assumes that Gotama 'flourished' in Sri Lanka in the fifth or sixth century BCE (Sullivan 1854: 61), but claims that the exact origin of Buddhism is uncertain, some claiming it to be a reformed part of Brahmanism, some believing it to be more ancient. He then makes his judgment, that Buddhism, 'though scarcely so debasing as the Hindu religion' is 'equally as contemptible and equally conducive to the moral and physical degradation of its followers' (Sullivan 1854: 61–2). He continues:

> It is impossible with any truth to style *that* a religion which ignores the existence of any Supreme Being whatever, and that inculcates the doctrine that after death the five elements composing the earthly tenement of the perfect, dissolve never to reunite, whilst those of the imperfect assume some other form; that, amongst other comforting doctrines, teaches that *pleasure* is the grand object of life; that acts of piety, charity, and abstinence are unprofitable; that the body is the only real good, and should be worshipped, and that pleasant food, fine clothes and handsome women, form the grand felicity of man.
>
> (Sullivan 1854: 62)

What Buddhists believe did not interest Baker, but the religion hovers behind his words about the British Empire in a quintessentially romantic way. When in Polonnaruwa, for instance, he evokes the city's past beauty, imaginatively recreating what its temples and monasteries might once been. But, when he comes to the images of the Buddha, these become 'massive idols', symbols of a decaying faith:

> There are the gigantic idols before whom millions have bowed; there is the same vacant stare upon their features of rock which gazed upon the

> multitudes of yore; but they no longer stare upon the pomp of the glorious city, but upon ruin, and rank weeds, and utter desolation . . . No mortal can say what fate befel those hosts of heathens, nor when they vanished from the earth.
>
> (Baker 1855: 76)

Later, the sight of a banyan tree growing on top of a *dāgaba (stūpa)*, splitting it into two, becomes 'an emblem of the silent growth of "civilization" which will overturn the immense fabric of heathen superstition' (Baker 1855: 83).

Binning is rare among these writers in that he devotes part of a chapter to Buddhism and shows evidence of having read material by those more experienced than he. Before this, he describes a temple belonging to the 'Siamese' sect [*Siyam Nikāya* or fraternity], which leads him to mention some of the rules of the monastic community and to present the Buddha as a deity (Binning 1857, I: 17–20). Within the chapter that focuses on Buddhism, his first main point is that Hindus believe the Buddha to have been the ninth and last avatar of Vishnu, while genuine Buddhists deny this (Binning 1857, I: 43).

Linear developments

These first points both touch and diverge from the patterns in the first decades. It is significant that the Buddha as deity is still present. Bennett in the 1840s evidently did not see the need to revise the view of the Buddha that he had gained in the second and third decades of the century. And Campbell keeps alive the idea of the Buddha as Saviour and object of intense worship: 'But as Boodhoo saves the souls of men, it is to him that the chief worship or honour is to be paid' (Campbell 1843: 184). The emphasis on the Buddha as part of a series continues, in Sullivan, Binning and Darby Griffith.

A wish to cut through apparently mythical representations of the Buddha to find the historical also continues, in Binning here and, more strikingly, in others to be studied later in this part. Binning speaks both of 24 appearances of 'Boodha, the supreme divinity', one of his roles being to purge the world of 'sin' (Binning 1857: 43) and of the Buddha as prince who, 'became merged in the deity, casting off his human nature' (Binning 1857, I: 43–4). But he also gives his own view in a similar way to Joinville: that the Buddha was an intelligent Indian who, disgusted with, 'the abominations and absurdities of Brahminism, endeavoured to reform the creed of his country, by preaching pure deism, and exerting himself to subvert the overwhelming influence of the priestly caste' (Binning 1857, I: 45). For Harvard, the object of the Buddha's reform was demon worship; for Binning, it returns to Brahmanism, perhaps under the influence of William Jones or William Knighton.

As for doctrine, all accept without question that Buddhists believe in a transmigrating soul. That *nibbāna* is annihilation continues to be stressed. But there is one person who puts a positive spin on this. 'Far from regarding the idea

of annihilation with horror', De Butts declares, 'the Boodhist looks forward to this "sinking into nought" as the termination of his worldly toils' (De Butts 1841: 131). That the ethics of Buddhism are, in essence, benign and praiseworthy remains.

Divergence

Points of divergence from the early years, however, can clearly be seen. Davy's dialogue with the monastic Sangha meant he dismissed the view that the Buddha was an *avatāra*, an incarnation of Vishnu, although he knew of it (Davy 1821: 229). In the other early writers, the idea hardly features at all. But the idea is present now, particularly in Binning and Sullivan, who encounter Buddhism after experience of India. For Sullivan, the Buddha is, without qualification, 'avatar or incarnation that is deified in Burmah and Ceylon' (Sullivan 1854: 63). Binning and Darby Griffith do, at least, distinguish between the Hindu perspective and the Buddhist.

It is not only *avatāra* language that enters from orientalist constructions of Hinduism, but also the idea of merging into deity, which, in turn, affects speculations about *nibbāna*. Sullivan, for instance, in his first words about Buddhism, refers to the five elements of perfect beings dissolving never to reunite, under the influence of the Methodist missionary Gogerly perhaps. Yet, at another point, he can write, 'After death, the worthy Gautama was supposed to have been absorbed body and soul, into a divine essence, which is an indefinite object of Buddhist faith, most impossible to explain to any one not previously understanding it' (Sullivan 1854: 64–5). This essence, according to Sullivan, has no influence on the world, 'but possesses the power of absorbing the souls of all those who have attained perfection' (Sullivan 1854: 65).

Fate, predestination and chance as governors of the Buddhist cosmos have left the picture. Those who cast the Buddha as divinity and then see no reason to bring in other factors to explain how the cosmos is governed are fewer, although De Butts can still write that rebirths are protracted for a being, 'according to the degree of favour he may find in the eyes of the deity he adores' (De Butts 1841: 131–2). Awareness of the law of *kamma* (action) takes the place of the three and again there is transference from Western constructions of Hinduism. Binning, for instance, although he believed Buddhists attribute divinity to the Buddha, also states that, within the Buddhist world-view, all things exist from natural causes, 'good and evil actions bringing their own reward or punishment' (Binning 1857, I: 45).

A further divergence flows from awareness of Turnour's work, which leads these writers to evoke Sri Lanka as a romantic 'other', with a glorious history emerging from the mists of time. As for Buddhist ethics, although their praiseworthiness is still recognized, the universalism present in writers such as Philalethes has disappeared, replaced by an imperative to assert the moral superiority of the West. Bennett and Darby Griffith are the only ones in this section who stress the good moral qualities of the Buddhists around them. Whenever he refers to the precepts of Buddhism, Bennett uses words such as 'humane'

(Bennett 1843: 272) and 'merciful' (Bennett 1843: 378), showing himself truly to be part of the first wave. That he is keen to respect Buddhist religious practices is shown when he orders his attendants not to prepare meat when he might find himself visiting a Buddhist temple (Bennett 1843: 378). That he experiences goodness from the monastic community is shown in his record of the care given to him by some of its members when he is taken ill on the same occasion. Similarly Darby Griffith, towards the beginning of her stay, observes: 'The Cinghalese are very humane, they have a great horror of killing or hurting any insect or reptile' (Darby Griffith 1842, I: 43). She, a naturalist, warms to this, and to the way in which Sri Lankans bring to her animals, birds and plants because of her interest (Darby Griffith 1842, IV: 9). She also sees the community of Buddhist monks as a benign influence, greatly respected: they are, 'well-educated and well-informed, acting as preceptors to the young' (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 58).

The others, Campbell, Binning and Sullivan, are willing to credit Buddhism with a worthy moral ideal[2] but no more than that. In the present, Campbell states, Sri Lankan adults, 'cared very little about religion of any kind, unless when their selfish views or interests happened to be concerned' (Campbell 1843, II: 264). He uses a conversation with a Headman – on hearing that his son was accused of lying, the Headman claimed that the crime was not the lie but being found out – to claim that it is, 'next to impossible', 'to expect that any good or useful impressions can be produced in the minds of a people like the Kandyans, many of whom are by no means ignorant or barbarous' (Campbell 1843, II: 266–7). Binning writes of the five precepts, 'I scarcely need say that these precepts are never observed, at least by the Cingalese' (Binning 1857, I: 45). And this is Sullivan:

> Then again, the bestial degrading nature of the Hindoo and Buddhist faith, offering to its votaries no object of engrossing thought, either of duties for the present, or hopes or dread for the future, renders life to them a blank: they have not even the excitement of the chase, or of war, or the uncertainty of agriculture, to harden and string up their natures, and stimulate their energies. The worm that creeps slowly through life, its only object being to consume its food, and to escape from being crushed, is almost as noble a creature as the emaciated, indolent, torpid Cingalese; his companions, the elephant and the hog, are far beyond him.
>
> (Sullivan 1854: 249)

Sullivan's words represent an extreme of offensiveness and belligerence, a rhetoric of disgust, shown throughout his book. Three other rhetorical movements can be seen in these writers: disdain, trivialization and self-contradiction.

The rhetoric of disdain

Disdain is present in the treatment of ethics and facets of Buddhism judged irrational or absurd. None, for instance, delve into Buddhist cosmology. Binning dispatches

it with the following, 'Regarding the twenty six heavens and thirty four hells which await the followers of Booddha hereafter, and other similar absurdities, nothing particular need be said' (Binning 1857, I: 46).

Darby Griffith is alone in mentioning heavens and hells as an important item of belief, together with the periodic destruction of worlds and the role of the Buddha within this cosmic pattern (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 57). As Upham had done, she links the planes of the Buddhist cosmos with doctrines surrounding the transmigration of the soul.

Trivialization and sarcasm

Sullivan is a prime example of the trivialization and sarcasm that mark some memoirs of this period. It is present most noticeably in the way in which *kamma* and rebirth are described. Griffith is the only one who sees rebirth as a potential movement upwards through the heavens, towards *nibbāna* (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 57). Most opt for the downward movement only, trivializing and condemning the concept through sarcasm. De Butts' third doctrinal point is that, 'After death, the Boodhists imagine that mankind assume the forms of the inferior animals, and transmigrate for many centuries' (De Butts 1841: 131). Binning explains that the soul may 'be sent to animate the body of a flea, or any other creature' (Binning 1857, I: 45). Sullivan, early on, declares:

> According to the Cingalese doctrine of metempsychosis, the spirits that have behaved badly in the human shape, are shifted into the form of some domestic animal, and those that have done well, into that of a wild animal; the most dreaded of all changes being that of a woman.
>
> (Sullivan 1854: 43)

Transmigration is ridiculous to the reasoning mind, 'enlightened by revelation' he later adds, before attributing it to a faulty, childlike reasoning from observed processes in nature (Sullivan 1854: 67–8). He then imagines the Sinhala people looking at animals only to speculate about their previous form:

> A Pariah dog, for instance, whose presence is an abomination, and whose portion is misery, is supposed to have been some luxurious Dives, who is now in want and ill-treatment, expiating his indifference of the Lazari of his human acquaintance.
>
> (Sullivan 1854: 69)

As for the insect that covers itself with sticks, he suggests the Sinhala people believe it must have been a person who stole wood from his neighbour (Sullivan 1854: 69). Though Sullivan might include such examples with a gleeful sarcasm, they nevertheless contradict his point that Buddhism has no moral sense or that lack of charity has no ill effects!

Contradictions and retractions

Contradictions and retractions pepper these writings. Sullivan is a prime example of the former, Darby Griffith of the latter. Sullivan's comments on the Buddha for instance, reflect several strands of rumour: the Buddha as an 'avatar'; a series of Buddhas governing successive world systems (Sullivan 1854: 64); a 'divine essence' that will unite all that is good (Sullivan 1854: 65) and a historical teacher who died 'after a most abstemious and praiseworthy existence' (Sullivan 1854: 63). And, when presenting *nibbāna*, the same happens. *Nibbāna* is: annihilation (Sullivan 1854: 62), absorption into a divine essence (Sullivan 1854: 64–5) and the ultimate triumph of good (Sullivan 1854: 65).

As for Darby Griffith, she and her husband moved to Galle, most probably in September or October 1841. Here, internal evidence suggests, she had greater contact with the missionaries. One of the first encounters she mentions is with William Bridgenell, Methodist, on 21 October 1841. And from this point, she retracts from her previous, fairly positive construction of Buddhism. In her treatment of *nibbāna*, for instance, she first links the state of what she calls '*nirvani*' to 'abstract happiness' and a termination of suffering. Within Buddhism even the wicked, she declares, who fall into loathsome animals or who drop from hell to hell can, if they reform their conduct, ascend again to the state of a man and gain the chance of '*nirvani*' (Darby Griffith 1842, III: 58). After her move to Galle, she explains that most people believe that devils can punish them even in another state, and that offerings can prevent this so 'that annihilation their greatest conceivable happiness will then be attained' (Darby Griffith 1842, IV: 67).

Noticeable also in 1841 and 1842 are long passages concerning devil worship,[3] fear of the spirits of the dead, poisons and revenge. These had not been mentioned in her early volumes, where she preferred to record appreciatively such things as the tastiness of Sinhalese curry and the scrupulous cleanliness of the people. She writes now with horror that terminally sick people are sometimes taken away from the house and left to die in the open because relations fear that the spirit of the person will otherwise haunt the house after death. She gives an example of a paralyzed woman of sound mind who was eaten by animals in the jungle, after having been left there by her son. And this is what she writes about poison:

> The Cingalese are an exceedingly revengeful people and seldom, if ever, allow any real or supposed injury to remain unpunished, they are not satisfied, and are often afraid, for they are great cowards, of letting their anger be made known by words or blows, but cherish the most lasting, and deadly hatred towards each other. I have often been told by persons who have lived a great deal in the interior of the country that Europeans in general have little or no idea how many murders are committed by the natives in the unfrequented parts of the jungle and from what I have

> heard, I have very little doubt of this, but I also feel – ? that far less is known of the number of deaths and diseases occasioned by poison. I have actually heard of most awful cases.
>
> (Darby Griffith 1842, IV: 142)

Concluding remarks

In these memoir writers, praise for the living tradition of Buddhism is scant, except for Bennett and Darby Griffith. Also significant is that Buddhism continues to be linked to the irrational. Campbell feels that much that the Dambulla priests tell him is mythological or a fabrication (Campbell 1843, II: 183). Sullivan claims that a 'man of genius or imagination' is needed to find sense in the outline he gives of the religion (Sullivan 1854: 65). Baker in his stress on superstition implies irrationality. Only De Butts, Binning and Darby Griffith show genuine appreciation.

5

CHRISTIAN EXCLUSIVISM

The Protestant missionaries and their friends

Many Sri Lankan Christians today, and also some Buddhists who were educated in Christian schools, remain devoted to the memory of the nineteenth-century Christian missionaries – with good reason. Most missionaries were friendly and caring towards all in their day-to-day work. And as in the early years, they were sincere and committed, willing to face personal and financial hardship, sometimes self-sacrificially.[1]

What is significant for this study, however, is that, in these middle decades, the missionaries said little that was positive about Buddhism. Their exclusivist religious convictions and an increased demand from home for stories about the conversion of the heathen precluded this, pushing them towards a nihilistic interpretation that now refused even to grant moral worth to Buddhist charity. They could permit themselves neither romanticism nor the detached stance of the observer. Coupled with this they claimed the moral high ground over other interpreters of Buddhism on the pretext that they lived in closer proximity to the beliefs of the ordinary people than the majority of British expatriates.

From the Anglican tradition, I have chosen Bishop James Chapman, Rev. James Selkirk and Dr Barcroft Boake. Chapman (b. 1799) was the first Anglican Bishop of Colombo, serving from 1845–1861. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge and ordained deacon in 1823. *Memorials of James Chapman* was published in 1892, drawing extensively on his talks and sermons. James Selkirk (b. 1799) was a CMS missionary who arrived in Sri Lanka in 1826 and served until 1840. In 1844 he published *Recollections of Ceylon*, which contained general information about the island and its religion, a report of the work of CMS and extracts from his personal diary. Barcroft Boake was not a missionary but an Irish member of the Church of England who graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. He arrived in Sri Lanka in 1842 and was Principal of the Colombo Academy for well over two decades. He became known for his opposition to any administrative relationship between the British Government and Buddhism. Much of the information in this chapter will be drawn from his 1855 publication on this topic.

From the Baptist tradition I will use Charles Carter, James Allen, Joshua Russell and Alastair Mackenzie Ferguson. Charles Carter was the most outstanding BMS scholar in Sri Lanka, specializing in Sinhala. Within four months of his

arrival in 1853, he was able to preach in the language. He translated the Bible into Sinhala and compiled several handbooks of Sinhala grammar. Ill-health forced him back to Britain in 1881, from where he worked on a still authoritative English–Sinhalese Dictionary, published in Sri Lanka in 1891. James Allen arrived as a BMS missionary in 1846. Joshua Russell visited Sri Lanka as part of a tour undertaken for the BMS, publishing a record of this in 1852. Alastair Ferguson (1816–1892) was not a missionary, but he was a staunch member of the Colombo-based Baptist congregation. Born in Scotland, he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1837 and died in Colombo after 55 years in the island.[2] Although he entered planting and was Acting Magistrate of Jaffna in the 1840s, it was as an editor and journalist that he became most well known.

Daniel John Gogerly and Robert Spence Hardy were the most notable Methodist interpreters of Buddhism of this period. They have a section of their own. In the current chapter, I draw on a handful who were not specialists in Buddhism: William Bridgenell, who was in Sri Lanka between 1824 and 1849; Thomas Kilner, in Sri Lanka between 1830 and 1850; Dr Andrew Kessen, between 1841 and 1857 and James Nicolson, between 1861 and 1892. Also relevant are the words of Rev. Dr Frederick Jobson (1812–1881), President of the Methodist Conference in 1869–1870, who visited Sri Lanka when journeying to Australia as a representative of Methodism.

In 1840, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), representing the non-evangelical wing of the Church of England, entered the country. In 1849, it was given the trusteeship of St Thomas' College near Colombo. Opened in 1851, St Thomas' became one of the most prestigious schools in the island. The SPG sent only a handful of missionaries from Britain. The training and funding of local evangelists was more important to them. Just a couple of SPG voices will appear.

Buddhism as a region of darkness

The missionaries' first premise about Buddhism within this wave was that it was false, in a direct line with earlier decades. The atheism stressed by Harvard lay at the centre of this judgement. Bridgenell's words published in 1839 are paradigmatic:

> How can they indeed avoid error on this subject (concerning the Buddhist view on human 'passions'), when they err in the most dreadful of all errors, disbelief – not merely unbelief, the absence of faith, but disbelief, positive denial – of the existence of the uncreated, all-creating God.[3]
>
> (Bridgenell 1840: 12)

The next step in their argument was that this absence paved the way for idolatry. The Buddha image was an idol usurping the place of God (Selkirk 1844: vi; Chapman 1892: 160). It was rare for a missionary at this stage in the century to realize that the Buddha image was not worshipped in the Christian sense of the word.

In mapping idolatry, however, most non-specialist missionaries continued to direct more attention towards 'devil worship' than towards the Buddha, building on the early missionaries.[4] Boake itemized three systems, 'strongly opposed to each other': Buddhism; worship at the 'Dewales' and 'Devil worship' (Boake 1855: 12). Some were happy with Upham's speculation that demon worship was the ancient religion of Sri Lanka, never rooted out.[5] The dominant opinion was that demon worship was strong because of what Buddhism lacked. Allen, for example, declared, 'Though they embraced Buddhism, they felt, after all, that there was a void in it somewhere; and Satan and his emissaries had not overlooked the fact' (J. Allen 1863: 738).

Letters and diaries of missionaries at this time, therefore, are filled with descriptions of devil/demon worship and confrontation with those involved with it.[6] It is worth citing this description of a demon ceremony in Spence Hardy's *Jubilee Memorials*, written to commemorate 50 years of the Methodist Mission:

> In nearly all instances there are idols made for the occasion, of smooth clay, that are afterwards cast aside with the refuse of the dwelling; often with staring eyes, distended mouths dripping with blood, large tusks, and hideous features; the lighting of lamps, the use of charmed threads and betel leaves; the cutting of limes; the cleaving of cocoanuts; the forming of magical diagrams; the incessant chaunting of spells and invocations; putting on different dresses; dancing in various times; and with different modes of gesture; beating of tomtoms; blowing of horns or rude trumpets; waving of torches, trampling on fire, from which strange lights are made suddenly to flash; and movements in an apparent frenzy, sometimes rapid as the lightning. In some instances ingredients like those that seethe in the witch's cauldron are boiled in a human skull, and the demon priest professes to receive his power as he lies in an open grave.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1864: 49)

This was ample justification in missionary eyes that Sri Lanka was a region of darkness (Selkirk 1844: 245; Chapman 1892: 203)

The judgement that there was a cold void in Buddhism was not due to Buddhism's perceived atheism alone but also by what had become the normative missionary interpretation of *nibbāna*. With few exceptions, the missionaries of these middle decades adopted the view of their predecessors that Buddhists believed in transmigration of the soul until the goal of annihilation was reached. Russell was one of the few who now questioned this. For instance, although he prefaces this quote about the Buddha with words that are almost identical to Gogerly's,[7] the ending differs from him:

> He founded his affirmation that sorrow is connected with every form of existence, on the doctrine of perpetual transmigration; therefore, he

> could think of no mode of ceasing from suffering other than by ceasing to exist. It is, however, doubted by some writers, whether Buddha meant a cessation of existence, or merely a state of repose.
>
> (Russell 1852: 13)

Although Christian publications showed awareness of non-missionary scholars, Burnouf and Muller, for example,[8] few are willing to concede even as much as Russell.

A nihilistic interpretation was also given to the way of life leading to *nibbāna*. Both Upham and Davy thought they had glimpsed that the Buddhist path involved a destruction or repression of the 'passions'. Among the missionaries, this is renegotiated into the assertion that the cultivation of indifference to the world and the crushing of human feeling is the highest good in Buddhism. Thus, Bridgenell prefaces his statement concerning God in Buddhism with:

> The utter extinction of being is the acme of Budhistical felicity! The utter extinction of the passions is the acme of Buddhistical virtue! According to Budha's doctrine the latter ensures the former. What a degrading and misleading system! Even with respect to the right regulation of the passions, and the suppression of all that is immoderate and evil, Buddhists 'do greatly err'.
>
> (Bridgenell 1840: 11–12)

By 1855, Boake had refined this to:

> Pure Buddhism . . . is not so much a religion, as a system of Philosophy recommending as the greatest excellency attainable by man an apathetic indifference to all external things. It can therefore have no hold on the affections of the people.
>
> (Boake 1855: 44)

Some missionaries combined nihilist interpretations of *nibbāna* and the Buddhist religious life with the trivializing of rebirth in a way similar to the memoir writers. Chance has now truly left the picture. The general missionary view is that rebirth has something to do with *kamma*. Carter, the linguist, and Allen know that the word literally means 'action' and conclude that it is this action, meritorious and demeritorious, that governs the world.[9] The majority of missionaries, however, see *kamma* merely as an impersonal force within Buddhism that appoints a person's next rebirth. Selkirk's view would have been the most popular:

> Every evil suffered in the present life is in consequence of some bad actions done in a former; and every good enjoyed is in consequence of some good actions in a former. But neither the good nor the evil will be

> eternal, for the souls continue to transmigrate till purged of every particle of evil; when they are admitted to the supreme blessedness of annihilation.
>
> (Selkirk 1844: 92)

And, as the memoir writers, many choose to stress the downward progression alone.[10]

The missionaries, therefore, represented the Buddhist path as prescribing the extinction of passion, including compassion, in order to reach annihilation, within an impersonal system that condemned human beings to transmigrate through numerous lives because of evil committed in past lives about which they could know nothing. It allowed them to see only despair in Buddhism and gave them, so they believed, ample arguments in proof of the superiority of Christianity.

Buddhist ethics: selfish or non-operative

Gone, in this missionary period, is the admiration for Buddhist ethics found in the earlier decades, when Harvard's judgement could touch that of non-missionaries such as Upham. For example, Selkirk, as Philalethes had done, included a selection of moral maxims in his 1844 work, but his agenda was starkly different. It was so his readers could learn, 'how very defective and low is the standard of morality in a nation where the worship of the true God is unknown' (Selkirk 1844: v–vi).[11]

Four distinct judgements on Buddhist ethics can now be detected across missionary writings, and one area of bafflement. The missionaries were convinced that a moral system could not operate effectively without the commandments of a Supreme Being and the prospect of divine judgement. Since Buddhism provided neither, their first judgement was that Buddhism's moral premises could not be followed. Second, they argued that belief in transmigration, rather than nurturing individual responsibility, destroyed it, because of the fatalism they linked with the law of *kamma* (e.g. Russell 1852: 18). Third, they claimed that the doctrine of *kamma*, also, of necessity, destroyed compassion, because the misfortunes of others were seen as payments for their past misdeeds. When, in apparent contradiction, the missionaries witnessed acts of charity among Buddhists, they drew on their fourth judgement that Buddhist acts of goodness were performed purely for the purpose of gaining a better rebirth and were therefore selfish.

Thus, Selkirk can declare that one of 'the worst parts of the native Singhalese character is their neglect of the poor, and sick, and destitute' (Selkirk 1844: 264), and write later of Buddhist charity, 'Does not this prove that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, and that those who have no love to God have little disinterested love to their neighbours?' (Selkirk 1844: 410). And Chapman can urge Christians at the opening of a church in Kollupitiya, Colombo, in 1851, to 'be the *salt* of this heathen land; to stay the corruption of its impure morality and its false religions' (Chapman 1892: 171).

Bafflement occured when they encountered Buddhists who declared that they had not committed any wrong to their knowledge and therefore could not be in a state of sin. Selkirk, for instance, records a meeting with a Buddhist woman who claims just this (Selkirk 1844: 427). This was so distant from the missionary worldview that they were lost for words!

Emotion and rhetoric

A battlefield vocabulary emerged from this construction of Sri Lankan religiosity in a direct line from earlier missionaries. In fact, in this period, the weight of material referring to the ignorance, benightedness and wretchedness of the Sinhala people is overwhelming in its intensity. And when the High Church SPG appears on the scene, there is only more of the same. This is Rev. E. Mooyart, SPG missionary in Matara: 'Lying, sensuality and intemperance are vices most prominent in their [Buddhists'] character, and their very countenances are indicative of the habitual predominence of bad passions. This state of mental and physical degradation is truly appalling.'[12]

When tailored for Western consumption, this kind of language knew no moderation. Its aim was to whip up horror. It is horror that Barcroft Boake attempted to evoke in his campaign against the government. Had the reality of government patronage of Buddhism been presented to Sri Lankan civil servants, 'before the horror of Idolatry, which is natural to an English Christian, had been worn off by familiarity and example, they would have shrunk with detestation', he declares (Boake 1855: 32). And it is horror that arose in Frederick Jobson, when he visited a Buddhist temple on his second day in Sri Lanka, 10 November 1860. His record of this is at first detached, but, when he comes to describe the table in front of the images, the register changes:

> Before these are tables, or altars, with flower offerings upon them, fresh plucked in the day, and placed there by poor, deluded votaries. Some were there at the time, presenting their flowers; and as I stood in the midst within a heathen temple for the first time in my life, a shuddering horror came over me. I felt no patience with the yellow-robed priests about me; they seemed ministers in the very precincts of hell.
>
> (Jobson 1862: 70)

This rhetoric of horror was often clothed in a condescending pity for Buddhists themselves. And, not surprisingly, it resulted in a policy of 'no compromise'. Converts were forced to see that Christianity and Buddhism were in battle with one another, with the ultimate victory of Christianity assured.

A significant example of 'no compromise' comes from the history of the Methodist mission. In December 1834, a declaration that teachers in Christian schools would be forced to sign appeared in the Minute Book for the Colombo Methodist District. It contained a list of the Buddhist beliefs to be rejected and

the Christian beliefs to be accepted. Among the latter were:

> I do truly and fully believe that Jehovah is the only proper object of religious worship and that all worship paid to images, to priests or to any other person or thing is highly sinful and justly merits the most severest punishment both in this world and that which is to come.
>
> I do fully believe that all men have sinned . . . and are therefore under the curse of God's holy law; and that no man can, by the merit of any good works he may perform, obtain deliverance from the punishment due to his sins, but unless he obtain mercy from his Creator, he must perish for ever.

And among the former was:

> I renounce Buddhism because it teaches the ultimate annihilation of the Soul, whereas the Souls of the Righteous will be for ever happy with the Lord, and the Souls of the Wicked will be for ever cast into Hell.
>
> (District Minute Book South Ceylon 1831–1871: 26 (Methodist Church Headquarters, Colombo))

And all Buddhists would have been included in 'the souls of the wicked'.[13]

The triumphalistic emerged to bolster the 'no compromise' struggle. In 1832, the South Ceylon Methodist District added to a report that there was less devil dancing, 'If sin's strong holds are not yet demolished, yet "the gates of hell tremble." '[14] William Bridgnell can write in 1837 that Buddhism in Kelaniya 'is bowing down its head to the ground',[15] and a decade later, Kessen that, 'Superstition and idolatry are already tottering to their fall.'[16]

This triumphalism was sometimes fed by the belief that pure, philosophical Buddhism was dying. For example, Boake is certain that fear of Buddhism's collapse lay behind Buddhist insistence that their officers be directly appointed by government (Boake 1855: 44). Yet, in apparent contradiction, missionary writings reveal that instilling a 'no compromise' attitude into converts was no easy task. In letter after letter to their home societies, missionaries lamented the inability of Sri Lankans to see the incompatibility of Buddhism and Christianity.[17]

The larger, more long-standing Roman Catholic population was ever-present as a point of contrast. In 1847, Chapman notices the throng of devotees – 'Buddhists, Mahometans, Heathens and Christians', 'Singhalese, Tamalians and Portuguese' – at the Festival of St Anne in Puttalam and declares, 'Would that in the cause of truth we could kindle a like zeal.'[18]

Another voice that recognized the strength of Buddhism, therefore, was also present. In the same year as Bridgenell wrote triumphally from Negombo, where the number of Buddhists was anyway lower than in other parts of the South, Thomas Kilner wrote from Kalutara, 'A budhist temple stands on a rock, emblematic I fear of its permanency – within a hundred yards of our chapel, and it seems

to bid defiance to our efforts to displace this our most formidable foe.'[19] Rev. J.J. Oondatje, Sri Lankan SPG missionary would have agreed with him. From Matara, further south, he suggested:

> the fabric of superstition and false beliefs stands too strongly founded to be shaken, still less overthrown, by any casual efforts, or even by well-directed efforts for a brief period – years of labour and persevering toil will be needed, before any revolution in the religious opinions of the people can be expected to take place.
>
> (Reports from SPG Missionaries, 12 August 1851 from Rev. J.J. Oondatje, Q/IND/COL2, 5407:57 (SPG Arichives))

Selkirk and Chapman add more. Selkirk's style lacks the campaigning rhetoric of Boake and the hyperbole of Spence Hardy. His description of CMS progress expresses little triumphalism. Although he quotes missionaries who feel that Buddhism is declining[20] and Forbes' view that Buddhism has little hold over the people (Selkirk 1844: 99–100), his many examples of CMS work and the evidence of his own diary suggest a strong indigenous Sri Lankan religiosity and not only in the demon/devil worship sector.[21] Although intellectually he might feel that Buddhism should decline, and spiritually that Christianity must triumph, his experience is that Buddhism and its related faces have a strong hold over the hearts of the people. Chapman also stresses that the christianization of Sri Lanka will be slow, admitting in 1847 to his headquarters that Christians are 'battling but feebly against the giant Buddhism'.[22]

In 1840, Ferguson wrote a hymn for the Anniversary of the Ceylon Baptist Mission. Its words express both disappointment at the slow progress of evangelism and hope, the two poles of missionary awareness at this time. Verses 4–8 were:

4 Buddha's shrines are fast-forsaken,
Crumbles many an Idol fane!
Slumb'rers have begun to waken
And to find all refuge vain;
Demon worship
And the Crescent soon must wane.

5 But though superstition, wasting
Melts like morning mist away,
Still we mourn how few are hasting
To the light of gospel day;
Still too many
Wand'rers are and go astray!

6 Strengthen every Christian warrior
Make the powers of darkness fall;
Cast down each opposing barrier,

Now, at length, the heathen call,
Reign victorious,
God! Redeemer! all in all!

7 Then Ceylon, where beauteous nature
Clad in richest robes we see,
In the sight of her Creator,
Shall a second Eden be!
Pure and glorious,
Subject, king of kings, to thee.
(Ewing 1912: 63)

6

MISSIONARY SCHOLARS

Daniel Gogerly and Robert Spence Hardy

Many Christians in Sri Lanka remember Methodist missionaries, Daniel John Gogerly and Robert Spence Hardy, as caring, pioneering teachers. Buddhists, however, link them with betrayal, because both studied Buddhism to undermine it. As recently as 2001, the Report of the Sinhala Commission Part II identified Methodists as particularly guilty in twisting and decrying Buddhism, no doubt thinking of these two (The National Joint Committee 2001: 38).

Nevertheless, together with George Turnour, Gogerly and Spence Hardy represent a turning point in the British study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka because they went beyond oral sources and secondary accounts to systematic and sustained study of the Pāli and Sinhala texts. The work that resulted, although led by a proselytizing agenda, provided the first comprehensive translations of Buddhist texts into English. To this extent, they went beyond their missionary remit.

Gogerly (1792–1862) arrived in Sri Lanka in 1818, as a layman, through the influence of Richard Watson,[1] to supervise the printing press of the Methodist Mission. Ordained in 1823, he served 44 years in Sri Lanka, until his death. For 24 of these years, he was General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission in South Ceylon. During his entire period in Sri Lanka, he left the island only on two occasions 'when compelled to do so by affliction'.[2] He married four times, leaving one son who had seven children, one of whom married a Sinhala woman. There are therefore people with the name of Gogerly in Sri Lanka to this day.[3]

Gogerly began to learn Pāli and to collect Pāli texts in the 1830s with the help of Buddhist monks in Matara. He could eventually claim that he had a complete set of the *Tipiṭaka* and many of the commentaries.[4] He was soon translating. But he had to be convinced by colleagues, particularly Spence Hardy and Justice Stark of the Royal Asiatic Society, to publish. First to appear in print, in 1838, was a criticism of an article on the *Jātaka* in the Methodist journal, *The Friend* (*TF*). Later in the same year, his first self-contained piece appeared, 'On Transmigration', again in *TF*. Translations from the *Paritta* Chants and the *Dhammapada* followed in 1839 and 1840. In 1845 he read his first papers ('On Buddhism', an account of the Vinaya) before the RASCB (Gogerly 1845).

In 'On Transmigration', Gogerly revealed his agenda: that his researches into 'the hidden doctrines of Buddha' should be used to prove to Buddhists that they cannot call themselves wise (Bishop 1908, II: 224–5).[5] Some of the translated texts he published were selected to feed this agenda; others were offered with a neutral, scholarly remit. In 1849 he published *Kristiyāni Prajñapti* (The Evidences and Doctrines of the Christian Religion), a Sinhala work that had considerable influence in the nascent Buddhist Revival.

Posthumous assessments of Gogerly's work differed. The oral appreciation at the staff meeting of the Southern Ceylon Methodist District claimed that he had, 'facilitated the work of succeeding missionaries in Buddhist lands' by defining Buddhist doctrines that 'had become uncertain' and 'fixing the points of attack as well as by suggesting suitable arguments'.[6] Findlay and Holdsworth, historians of the Methodist missionary movement, declared with more truimphalism that Gogerly was 'the most redoubtable antagonist whom Buddhist priests have ever encountered' (Findlay and Holdsworth 1924, V: 70).

A different picture, however, was given by T.W. Rhys Davids, fellow orientalist. Writing the Forewords in Volume 2 of Gogerly's *Collected Works*, he called him, 'the greatest Pâli scholar of his age', and continued:

> At a time when the study of Pâli was surrounded by serious difficulties; when there was no grammar and no dictionary, above all when there were no printed texts; he mastered the language so thoroughly that he could not only read the MSS for himself, but interpret their contents, in English, for the benefit of others.
>
> (Bishop 1908, II: vii)

It is not true that Gogerly worked without precedents. That privilege must go to people in the first wave.[7] However, his translations charted new waters, although they would not stand up to twenty-first-century standards (Gooneratne 1968: 115; Harris 1993: 147). One Buddhist assessment of his work, however, was this:

> Mr Gogerly's knowledge of our sacred books was neither so extensive nor so profound as to entitle him to such an exalted position in the eyes of the learned bhikshus of Ceylon; nor did his Pali scholarship save him from grave blunders in his so called exposures of the errors of Buddhism.
>
> (D.B. Jayatilaka, editoral,
> *The Buddhist* (*TB*), XI, 1899–1900: 60)

The writings of Gogerly were brought together after his death by Rev. Arthur Stanley Bishop.[8]

Robert Spence Hardy (1803–1868)[9] was born in Lancashire. At 16 years, he moved to York to live with his maternal grandfather, Robert Spence, a founder member of the York Methodist Missionary Society and a supporter of Wilberforce. From him, he gained an interest in missionary work and social

action. From the Hardy side, he was exposed to the industrial revolution and to Tory politics. Ordained in 1825, he travelled in the same year to Sri Lanka. In 1830, he returned to Britain, visiting Bombay, Arabia, Egypt, Jerusalem, Beirut, Cyprus, Greece and Italy on the way. He married and returned to Sri Lanka in 1835.

In 1837, he launched *TF*, and, in 1839, *The Treasures of Ceylon*, a Sinhala periodical. Then, in 1839, well before Boake's treatise, he published, *The British Government and the Idolatry of Ceylon*, a carefully reasoned paper arguing that Buddhism was an offence against God and should be given no support by the colonial administration.

In 1848, he again returned to Britain, this time because of his wife's bad health. She died a year later, leaving him a single parent with three young children. For the next 14 years, he remained in Britain, publishing two major books: *Eastern Monachism* (1850) and *A Manual of Buddhism in its Modern Development* (1853).

Following the death of Gogerly in 1863, Spence Hardy returned to Sri Lanka and remained Chairman of the Methodist District of South Ceylon until 1865. During this period two further books appeared: *The Sacred Books of the Buddhists compared with History and Modern Science* (Colombo 1863), published in Sinhala in 1865, and *The Jubilee Memorials of the Wesleyan Mission of South Ceylon* (1865). *Christianity and Buddhism Compared* was published in 1874, after his death.

Spence Hardy avidly collected manuscripts, religious and literary, such that he was able to read before the RASCB in February 1848, a list of 467 books available in Sinhala, Pāli and Sanskrit (Spence Hardy 1848: 189). By choice, he concentrated on Sinhala. When he needed Pāli for his later works, a pupil of Gogerly's, Rev. David de Silva, helped him, since both Buddhists and some former Buddhists would no longer do so (Spence Hardy 1863 (Preface); Spence Hardy 1866: viii).

The Preface to *Eastern Monachism* is a significant pointer to his early method. He writes of wishing to learn more about the religion he was, 'attempting to replace' and of the, 'several thousands of hours spent with the palm-leaf in my hand and the ex-priest of Budha by my side' (Spence Hardy 1850: vi). He admits that learning Pāli might have been better but asserts that, 'authentic translations from the more modern languages are of great importance; and they have an additional interest, peculiar to themselves, as they reveal the sentiments, and illustrate the manners, of the present race of priests' (Spence Hardy 1850: viii).

Spence Hardy saw Sinhala as the gateway to understanding contemporary Buddhism and the socio-economic factors conditioning it. Coplans argues, convincingly, that this and his wish to study Buddhism as 'a thing-in-itself' makes him a precursor of Weber (Coplans 1980: 242–6). Hallisey has linked his method, not unfavourably, with 'intercultural mimesis', in other words that Spence Hardy echoed methods used by his Sinhala sources (Hallisey 1995: 39–41). Certainly, his continual claim, at least in the first part of his life, was that his area of expertise was the actual religion of the people, rather than the deeper points of Buddhist theory and metaphysics. And he believed the key to this was

the narrative tradition of the Sinhala, rather than the Pāli, texts (Spence Hardy 1838: 222).

Spence Hardy's writing on Buddhism, however, falls into two clear categories. Only his first two major works (Spence Hardy 1850, 1853) exhibit the innovation Coplans identifies. *A Manual of Buddhism*, for instance, presents Buddhism through translated Sinhala texts; Spence Hardy's analysis is secondary. In his later works the method changes. Polemic replaces description, with appeal to Pāli rather than Sinhala sources. Coplans attributes this to his time in England in the 1850s, when his religious interests moved away from the social aspects of religion towards pietism and a stronger championing of a capitalist free-market economy (Coplans 1980: 192–3). But another factor was present. By 1860, Spence Hardy knew that his first books on Buddhism had not only contributed to the missionary project, but also to a positive interest in Buddhism, from people as notable as Schopenhauer and Wagner – something he could not tolerate. This alone would explain why he rejected one method to return to that seen in his early polemical pamphlet on Buddhism as idolatry (Spence Hardy 1839) and his contribution to the 1839 Sinhala-language almanac (Young and Somaratne 1996: 68).

Spence Hardy and Gogerly were colleagues and learnt from each other. However, tensions developed between them, particularly over the mission's educational policy (Coplans 1980: 169). It is possible that Spence Hardy's long sojourn in England after his wife's death was due to an unwillingness to work with Gogerly. Their personal rhetorical styles differed[10] and their areas of expertise, diverged. Nothing, in Gogerly's analysis of Buddhist doctrine, for instance, compares to Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, with its translations from Sinhala texts and Sinhala versions of Pāli texts including the *Jātaka*; the *Visuddhi Magga*; *Milindaprasnaya*; *Pūjāvaliya*; *Saddharmālankāraya*; *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*; *Amāvatura*; *Thūpavamsa*; *Rājavaliya*; and sections of the *Sutta Piṭaka*.[11] Of five hundred pages, only about a fifth are given to Buddhist philosophy and ethics. Nevertheless, the interpretation that Gogerly and Spence Hardy gave to key doctrinal points was similar. Interesting also is that both writers became more negative about Buddhism as they aged.

Privileging the texts

Both Gogerly and Spence Hardy privileged textual study over knowledge gained from Buddhist practitioners and then used this study to challenge practitioners, a different paradigm of encounter from the early years. Gogerly's conviction was that the texts, although not an exact record (Bishop 1908, I: 8), embodied authenticity whereas the practice of the people did not. He cited two reasons: the doctrinal ignorance of the monastic Sangha and the limited teaching given to lay people (Bishop 1908, II: 222–33). And if the true meaning of the texts was revealed to the people, he believed, evangelism would be easier. For instance, his corrective to the lay belief that an affectionate thought of the Buddha was enough

for a happy rebirth was this:

> He (the Buddha) affirms that the sinner is miserable in this world and will be so in that which is to come, and that there is no place in the earth, in the sky, or in a cave of a rock, even to the extent of a hair's breadth, where the sinner can hide himself from the consequences of his crimes.
>
> (Bishop 1908, I: 6)

Spence Hardy offered similar correctives, for example to the inconsistency between showing devotion to the Buddha and believing the Buddha to be in *nibbāna* (Spence Hardy 1850: 228). But his early, more anthropological approach led to a different relationship with the texts, as data to be worked with, however 'other' or however inconsistent they may seem. In his later works, in contrast, he rests his whole attempt to undermine Buddhism on the unreliability of the texts. In *Christianity and Buddhism Compared*, for instance, he claims that the texts 'can only be received as a repository of ancient myths, legends and traditions, such as are treasured up in the memory, and heard from the lips of the aged of nearly all nations' (Spence Hardy 1874: 11).

Mentoring the non-specialist

Where did the two differ, therefore, from their missionary colleagues? Where did they speak with the same voice? Where did they try to correct? There is both collaboration with and divergence from the representations seen in the last chapter. On demon cults, for instance, Spence Hardy did not diverge from the dominant missionary line, as the passage quoted in the previous chapter shows, but Gogerly did. His early work, 'On Budhism – Pirit', for instance, sought to modify contemporary views about popular Buddhism. It was not only a matter of justice but of scholarly accuracy. His introduction, therefore, referred to 'exorcism' rather than the devil dance (Gogerly 1839: 185; Bishop 1908, II: 327). He then pointed out that what Europeans termed 'devils' were '*Yakshayo*', inferior gods, part of the Buddhist cosmological system rather than representatives of the diabolical, and that only some were deemed malignant and a cause of terror. Lastly, he stressed that the Buddha, while recognizing the power of demons, condemned the devil dance as useless and recommended the reciting of Buddhist discourses instead (Gogerly 1839: 185–6), a point Spence Hardy is also willing to admit (Spence Hardy 1850: 240).

Neither writer, however, broke with the generally negative missionary assessment that had developed in linear fashion from the early years. What they did was nuance it, challenging unscholarly judgements and adding what they saw as more convincing evidence. In addition, they paid far more attention than other missionaries to the Buddha.

Reducing the Buddha: a sensitive man who got it wrong

Both Gogerly and Spence Hardy were significant players in the development of orientalist representations of the Buddha. When presenting extracts from the *Vinaya* to the RASCB in 1845, for instance, Gogerly first situates Buddhahood in the context of innumerable Buddhas, each equal, each with the same message (Bishop 1908, I: 46–8). Later in the same lecture, he focuses on Gotama as a historical figure and strips his biography of the hagiographic. Gotama is 'the son of one of the inferior sovereigns of India', who searched for religious truth, first through 'mortification' and then 'solitary meditation'. He continues with words echoed by later writers including Joshua Russell:

> He came from his solitude professing that he had, by his own unaided powers, attained to the perfection of wisdom and purity; that his doctrines were irrefutable; that he made known the paths by which sorrow could be extinguished through a cessation of existence; and that holiness and wisdom were the paths in which it must be attained.
>
> (Bishop 1908, I: 69)

In *An Outline of Buddhism* more detail is added to this picture but Gogerly's method is the same (Bishop 1908, I: 16–18).

Biographies of the Buddha are given in Spence Hardy's four main books. In *Eastern Monachism* the biography is skeletal and factual, with touches of sarcasm. For example, when speaking of the Buddha's miraculous powers, Spence Hardy declares, 'but in those days the possession of supernatural power was a common occurrence and there were thousands of his disciples who could, with the utmost ease, have overturned the earth or arrested the course of the sun' (Spence Hardy 1850: 4).

A Manual of Buddhism, in radical contrast, devotes pages 87–353 to the Buddhas previous to Gotama, Gotama's former lives and his last life as a Buddha, drawing mostly from the Sinhala *Pūjāvaliya*. Although Spence Hardy adapts the chronology (Spence Hardy 1853: 354–5), accusing some of his sources of a 'prostration of intellect' (Spence Hardy 1853: 359–60), the resulting narrative shows an unmistakable attempt to present the positive. The Buddha is benevolent and omniscient. He can perform miracles, interpret dreams and preach Abhidhamma in the heavens. His conclusion is that, if the miraculous is eliminated:

> there runs through the narrative a semblance of reality; and the reasons why he renounced the world, the austerities he practiced in the wilderness, and his warfare with the powers of evil, have a parallel in the history of almost every ascetic saint whose life has been recorded.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1853: 355)

By the 1860s, however, Spence Hardy has discarded traditional biographies as unreliable, doubting whether truth can be separated from fiction (Spence Hardy 1866: 187). In *The Legends and Theories*, he constructs his own narrative, imagining Gotama as a sincere young man struggling for truth. The Buddha's enlightenment becomes:

> He saw what others had not seen, and what others had seen he disregarded. His attention was fixed upon himself; and when the thunder shook the earth around him, its roll came not to him as a voice telling of the presence of God, but as a monition to remind him that nothing whatever is permanent. In the brightest sunlight, as in the darkest storm-cloud, everywhere and always, there appeared to him unquiet, disappointment, and sorrow... From all outward and visible things he turned away; and as he concentrated all his powers on the contemplation of his own being, he learnt, by this process, to look upon man as a mere rupa, an organised body, attached to which are certain qualities or attributes... Over these conclusions he long brooded, sometimes battling with them as with real existences, until he had satisfied himself that the cessation of man's restlessness can only be brought about by the cessation of his existence.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1866: xxxii)

Miracles more astounding, 'than were ever even thought of by any wonder-worker among the western nations' are said to have occurred, but are not described. Concluding, though, he is forced to admit that he can see no reason for the Buddha's followers to invent such things as Gotama's asceticism, his reluctance to teach, the attempts on his life, the admission of women to his community and the cause of his death (Spence Hardy 1866: xxi).

Spence Hardy's method here is only superficially sensitive. The aim of the book is to ridicule the trustworthiness of the Buddha's teachings by comparing them with Western science. Reducing the Buddha's enlightenment to the non-mystical event of an ardent, young, spiritual seeker coming to the wrong conclusions feeds into this.

In *Christianity and Buddhism Compared*, Spence Hardy jettisons even what he was willing to accept in 1866. Seeking to prove the superiority of Jesus, he denies absolutely the credibility of the Theravāda texts and declares Gotama to be a creature of the imagination, fabricated by disciples who sought for mass appeal:

> The difficulty connected with the working out of the contrast we propose to make, becomes the more apparent, when it is remembered that the Sákya Muni of modern Buddhism is a creature of the imagination alone, though formed, it may be, from the glimmerings of true tradition: so that the comparison [between Jesus Christ and Gotama Buddha] is really between history and legend.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1874: 35)

Nihilism undergirded: lines of continuity

Embedded within the missionary representation of Buddhism since the beginning of the century had been two maxims: Buddhists do not believe in God; the goal of the Buddhist path is annihilation. Gogerly and Spence Hardy reinforce both. In 1847, for instance, Gogerly chose to translate the *Brahmajāla Sutta*[12] to show that the Buddha knew of the idea of a Creator God and rejected it. And throughout his writings, this is one of the reasons why he presents Buddhism as a school of philosophy, rather than a religion (Bishop 1908, I: 2).

As for *nibbāna*, neither writer denies that it is annihilation, to the point of distorting some of the material they translate. For instance, Gogerly's translation of *Dhammapada* verse 202, which uses *santi*, peace or tranquillity, as a synonym for *nibbāna*,[13] becomes:

> No fire is so fierce as that of lust, no crime so great as hatred. No sorrow is equal to that produced by the five Khandas, and no good equal to the ceasing of existence.[14]
>
> (Bishop 1908, II: 285)

And Spence Hardy's lengthy description of *nibbāna* in *Eastern Monachism* includes a passage from the *Milinda Prasnaya*, which links it with delight (Spence Hardy 1850: 295) and sections of the '*Asangkrata-sutra*' [Pāli: *Asaṅkhata-saṃyutta*] where it is presented as subtle, free from decay, pure, tranquil, firm and stable, free from death and free from sorrow (Spence Hardy 1850: 292).[15] In spite of this evidence, Spence Hardy maintains that *nibbāna* means annihilation (Spence Hardy 1866: 174). In his last work, he calls it the 'suicide of existence' (Spence Hardy 1874: 71).

On the subject of *kamma*, there is also continuity with the earlier period. Gogerly, for instance, although he is aware that the word literally means 'action', can write in his introduction to the *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta*[16] in the 1840s, that it is, 'an occult power, an irresistible fate, resulting from the merit or demerit of actions performed in a previous state of existence' (Bishop 1908, II: 492).

Spence Hardy echoes this view. It is the power that controls the universe (Spence Hardy 1850: 5) and determines an individual's life (Spence Hardy 1850: 339). But it is also, 'a hereditary disease', which can break out in violence after many generations (Spence Hardy 1853: 396).[17]

As for Buddhist ethics, the pattern is again familiar. Both Gogerly and Spence Hardy admit the positive, relegate description of it to the end of their presentations, and attempt to undermine it through the four missionary arguments previously mentioned. Gogerly adds another: that it is simply unremarkable (Bishop 1908, I: 45–6). Yet, to be fair to Gogerly, Buddhist ethics receive positive recognition in a series of translations read before the RASCB between 1846 and 1848.[18] 'Virtue' is also seen as central to Buddhism both in *An Introduction to Buddhism* and in Gogerly's representation of the Four Noble Truths.

On ethics, Spence Hardy is more condemnatory than Gogerly but again a distinction can be drawn between early and late writings. In the 1850s, he judges ethics to be the best and most rational part of Buddhism (Spence Hardy 1853: 506) and links the Buddha with 'a moral revolution more important in its results, and more extensive in its ramifications, than any other uninspired teacher, whether of the eastern or western world' (Spence Hardy 1853: 358). He gives lengthy, positive descriptions of what Buddhists are called to refrain from, taking material from the Sinhala commentaries on the *Sigālovāda Sutta*[19] and the *Visuddhi Magga* with additional data from the *Milindaprasnaya*, the *Pūjāvaliya* and the commentary on the *Sāleyakka Sutta*.[20] Detailed analyses are given, for instance, of what constitutes taking of life, theft and adultery (Spence Hardy 1853: 461–8). Yet, what is given with one hand is taken away with another by using familiar missionary judgements (Spence Hardy 1850: 341).

In his later polemical works, description is discarded. Since a Supreme Being is not recognized, Buddhism must be 'a religion destitute of the requisite authority; not as a religion in the strict sense, but as a system of ethics' (Spence Hardy 1874: 109).[21]

One element that both Spence Hardy and Gogerly add to missionary representations is Buddhism's treatment of women. Although Spence Hardy translates the *Sigālovāda Sutta* of the Pāli Canon, which enjoins mutuality of respect between husband and wife (Spence Hardy 1853: 480), neither he nor Gogerly choose to see this respect in practice or indeed in other texts. Gogerly can declare, 'The fair sex is not treated with much respect by the Buddhist writers; one sentence will be sufficient to show this: "that which is named woman is sin" *i.e.*, she is not vicious, but vice' (Bishop 1908, II: 223).

Jubilee Memorials contains the strongest condemnation. 'We should be ready to initiate a mission against paganism, were it only for what it has done to crush and degrade women' (Spence Hardy 1865: 250), Spence Hardy writes, and continues:

> 'That which is named woman, is sin', says Gotama. And again he tells us, that there is no woman, who, if the opportunity is presented, will resist temptation. Even chastity is not a virtue; there must be continence, or there is iniquity. The woman is not a man, because she has committed sin in a former birth, and her sex is a punishment for her vice. With such sentiments expressed by one who is regarded as the all-wise, we need not wonder that in buddhist countries woman has been downtrodden and despised.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1864: 251)

Nihilism undergirded: new constructions

The new in the writings of Spence Hardy and Gogerly centre on three areas: *anattā* (non-self); the Four Noble Truths and meditation.

Gogerly's discovery: anattā

Gogerly's first major article on Buddhism, 'On Transmigration', focused on *anattā*, 'non-self'. He believed most Buddhists were unaware of the doctrine so it is probable that he discovered it while translating. His representation of it then became key both to his attack on Buddhism and to what he offered other missionaries and Sri Lankan converts.

Gogerly begins 'On Transmigration' with a 'brief view of the 62 sects of philosophers' condemned in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*[22] one of which is eternalism (*sassatavāda*), and then outlines what he sees as the Buddha's stance on rebirth, which includes, 'Sentient beings formerly existed in their causes; that is, not the same identical beings who now exist, but other beings whose moral merit or demerit became the causes of present existence' (Gogerly 1838: 45; Bishop 1908, II: 216).

He proceeds:

> These tenets are peculiar. The general idea of transmigration is that the same spiritual being successively animates various bodies, but Budhism teaches that transmigration is not a removal of the same identical spiritual intelligence from one state to another, but an infinite series of new formations of body and soul, each link in the series having the abstract merit or demerit of the actions of the preceding link as its effective cause.
>
> (Gogerly 1838: 45–6; Bishop 1908, II: 217)

Following this, he quotes from 'the Questions of Milinda' to prove the corroboration of other authoritative texts in this argument (Bishop 1908, II: 218–20).[23] Gogerly's conclusion is:

> *There can be no other kind of transmigration*, for the Philosophy of Budha does not admit of the existence of a distinct, unique spiritual existence residing in the body, and separable from it. In other words, he does not admit of the existence of a *soul* in our sense of the word.
>
> (Gogerly 1838: 48; Bishop 1908, II: 221)

A detailed exposition of the cosmological and psychological determinates in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* follows to demonstrate that the Buddha saw nothing within the constituents of the cosmos or the human being that could constitute a soul. He ends with the chariot simile from 'Milinda Pañha' (Bishop 1908, II: 243–6).[24]

Throughout his life, Gogerly did not budge from this interpretation. He used it not only to reinforce the nihilism of the missionary interpretation of *nibbāna*, but also to attack Buddhist ethical teaching by claiming that the *anattā* theory necessarily led to lack of moral responsibility (Bishop 1908, 11: 248). As with his treatment of *nibbāna*, he dismisses textual material that challenges his line, for instance, texts stressing continuity between births or that the Buddha trod the Middle Path

between the two doctrines of *sassatavāda* and *ucchedavāda*, eternalism and annihilationism (Bishop 1908, 1: 39–40).

As for Spence Hardy, he is aware that the popular notion regarding a person's path through existences 'approaches rather to transmigration' (Spence Hardy 1850: 340). And, in *A Manual of Buddhism*, he gives phrases from the texts that imply that it is the soul that passes to another plane (Spence Hardy 1853: 397–8). Yet, he and other missionaries eventually accede to the new material Gogerly puts before them.[25]

The Four Noble Truths: nihilism embodied

Gogerly came across the Four Noble Truths soon after he began translating. Within his 1939 series on 'Pirit', he gives an explanation of the Truths in a footnote within a section on 'Classifications or Questions for the Investigation of a Candidate for the Priesthood', one of which concerns, 'The four chief truths' (Gogerly 1839: 206; Bishop 1908, II: 338).[26] It is placed alongside other doctrines, rather than privileged. The first part of the translations from the *Vinaya* that he offers to the RASCB in 1845 is a section from *Pārājika* I,[27] in which the Buddha describes his enlightenment to a Brahmin, including, using Gogerly's translation, 'This is sorrow; this is the source of sorrow; this is the cessation of sorrow; this is the path by which cessation from sorrow may be obtained' (Bishop 1908, I: 57).[28] But again Gogerly's commentary on the text, does not privilege this over others.

In the 1850s, the Truths move further to the centre when Gogerly mentions the content of the first sermon of the Buddha, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, at the beginning of his second presentation of *Vinaya* material to the RASCB.[29] But the term 'Noble Truths' is still not mentioned. It is only in 1861 with *An Outline of Buddhism*, that Gogerly privileges the Four Noble Truths as 'Truths' in a general article about Buddhism. Even here, he does not place them at the beginning. He starts with belief in 'an incalculable number of Buddhas' (Bishop 1908, I: 16). Moving to Gotama, the knowledge gained at his enlightenment is said to consist of, 'the causes of sorrow and continued existence, and the mode in which the series of existence and the wretchedness connected with it might for ever cease' (Bishop 1908, I: 18). Buddhist constructions of cosmology, metaphysics, the lack of a Creator God and a repeat of the argument in 'On Transmigration' follow. It is only then that the Truths are reached, in the context of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) and *avijjā* (ignorance). Claiming that *avijjā*, in the 'Vibhanga division of the Abidhamma' is defined as ignorance of the Truths, he introduces them as 'the four principal doctrines of the Buddha' and describes them thus:

1 That sorrow is connected with existence in all its forms.
2 That its continuance results from a continued desire of existence.

3 That a deliverance from existence and its sorrows can only result from the complete extinction of this desire.
4 That this extinction can only result from a course of pure morals, eight divisions of which are specified.

(Bishop 1908, I: 40–1)

From this Gogerly moves to *nibbāna*, which, he adamantly states, is a cessation of existence rather than annihilation, since the latter would presuppose an existent soul, 'whereas according to Buddha there is no soul in existence which can be annihilated' (Bishop 1908, I: 43).

In Spence Hardy's work also the Truths gain importance as the decades pass. In *Eastern Monachism* 'the four satyas or great truths' are mentioned as one of the five '*bhúmi*' or essential grounds of Buddhism, without further elaboration (Spence Hardy 1850: 193). In *A Manual of Buddhism*, they are itemized and described, but only in the last chapter on ethics, in an appendix-like 'Terms and Classifications' section. The Truths come as the ninth item in a list of 21 (Spence Hardy 1853: 496–7). Three formulations are given of them in the text, and three more, by Gogerly, Armour[30] and Csomo de Köros, in a footnote.[31] In the main body of the text, the concepts of *dukkha* (sorrow/unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence), and *taṇhā* and *upādāna* (craving and grasping) enter, but only after cosmology and the Buddha biography have been exhaustively covered (Spence Hardy 1853: 387).

It is in *Legends and Theories of the Buddhists* that the Four Noble Truths are given primacy of place, this time within Spence Hardy's reconstruction of the Buddha biography. Immediately after the enlightenment, the first sermon is mentioned:

> In it he declares that there is sorrow connected with every mode of existence; that the cause of sorrow is desire, or attachment (to sensuous objects); that the destruction of sorrow is to be effected by being set free from attachment to existing objects (which secures the possession of nirwána); and that to be set free from this attachment there must be right conduct, mental tranquility, and other similar virtues.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1866: xviii)

In *Christianity and Buddhism Compared*, the Truths are given similar centrality and explained using similar words, but with a clearer appeal to the centrality within them of the law of cause and effect (Spence Hardy 1874: 70).

Meditation: a touch of the occult

Both Gogerly and Spence Hardy recognized that meditation has a place in Buddhism, and so differed from many others in this period. Spence Hardy's *Eastern Monachism* devotes a chapter to 'bháwaná or meditation'. Meditation on

the four *brahmavihāra* and the impurity of the body, *Kasiṇa* practice (use of an external object to develop meditative concentration) and the *dhyāna* (Sanskrit: Pāli: *jhāna* – meditative absorptions) are described in detail. There is no hint, however, that any of these practices are part of lay life, except in a late mention of the Act of Truth. And the use of *Kasiṇa* is linked only with the gaining of supernatural powers. He concludes that the passages he has taken from the texts, which include the 'Wisudhi Margga' (*Visuddhimagga*), contain 'many sentiments that are worthy of praise' but that the practices recommended lead to, 'no practical effort of humanity' (Spence Hardy 1850: 249–50).

In *A Manual of Buddhism*, meditation is hardly mentioned, except for a reference to contemplating the elements of the body at the beginning of the section on ontology (Spence Hardy 1853: 387). In his later works, however, it moves towards the centre but only as a method for the gaining of occult powers, which he dismisses as insignificant in the face of Buddhism's goal – nothingness (Spence Hardy 1866: 185). *Sammā samādhi* (right concentration) as part of the Eightfold Path, becomes 'mental tranquility' (Spence Hardy 1866: xviii).

The only mention of meditation in Gogerly's *An Outline of Buddhism* comes with his coverage of the Buddha's enlightenment, when the *jhāna* are compared to mesmeric trance (Bishop 1908, I: 17) and judged not unique to Buddhism. He seems to miss completely the link between meditation, and wisdom or mindfulness, probably because he believed the Buddhist path involves 'subjection' of the mind.[32] His treatment of the *Appamāda Vagga* in the *Dhammapada* is a good illustration. Usually translated as carefulness or heedfulness, '*appamāda*' should point to exertion and effort, particularly in meditation. Gogerly, however, translates it as 'Religion'. The first verse of the *Vagga* therefore becomes, 'Religion is the path to immortality, irreligion is the path to death. The religious die not, but the irreligious are even as now dead' (Bishop 1908, II: 253).[33]

Rationality and revelation: fighting the tide

The increase through time in Gogerly and Spence Hardy's negativity towards Buddhism is shown impressively in when and where they project irrationality onto Buddhism. Throughout his life, Gogerly predicated his work on the value of rational debate with Buddhists, a stance that would have collapsed if he had believed Buddhism was totally irrational. However, in 1861, towards the end of his life, in *An Outline of Buddhism*, he presented cosmology as doctrine for the first time and used it to suggest irrationality and scientific confusion at the heart of Buddhism (Bishop 1908, I: 18–28). In addition, the structuring of the section on metaphysics that followed the cosmology was more obviously designed than in earlier presentations to stress what he saw as the negative side of Buddhism in comparison with Christianity, beginning with 'No Creator' and 'No Soul'.

It is Spence Hardy who takes this approach furthest. In 1853, he could claim that 'the grand principles' of Buddhism would be complete without Buddhism's cosmology (Spence Hardy 1853: 40–1) and that some of Buddhism's speculations,

'are as rational', 'as any other system that denies the agency of a self-existent and ever-living God' (Spence Hardy 1853: 398). But no doubt in the face of European claims that Buddhism was more rational than Christianity, he never repeated this. So, in *Legends and Theories of the Buddhists*, the Buddha biography, and Buddhist geography, astronomy, mathematics, cosmological constructions and monasticism are all attacked because they do not accord with 'European literature and science' (Spence Hardy 1866: 80). A ridiculing of textual reliability is combined with a merciless exposing of what Spence Hardy sees as scientific impossibilities presented by Buddhism as truth. *A Manual of Buddhism* had declared that correct notions in Buddhist cosmology were like, 'a dim light where there are dangers numberless' (Spence Hardy 1853: 35). Here, in the 1860s, he takes the propositions of Buddhist cosmology one by one and, using literalism to the point of absurdity, attempts to prove their falsehood, dismissing the view that they are allegorical. For instance, he interjects at one point:

> I am told that my labour here may be spared, as there is scarcely any one who will read these pages that really believes in the existence of Ráhu. But is not this a declaration and confession, that Buddha either told a wilful untruth, or that he was himself deceived?
>
> (Spence Hardy 1866: 118–19)

His argument is that both cosmology and philosophy rest on the same foundation, 'if Maha Méru, and the other things I have enumerated above, are proved to have no existence, or to be impossibilities, Buddhism cannot be a true religion, and must be rejected as a guide to salvation or to heaven' (Spence Hardy 1866: 197–8).

Concluding remarks

The British encounter with Buddhism in Sri Lanka and in Britain was irrevocably changed by the scholarship of Gogerly and Spence Hardy. Although they sought to reinforce the missionary project, both introduced a generation of Europeans to Buddhism through their translations. Gogerly's translations from the *Dhammapada*, for instance, influenced the young William Knighton of our next chapter. Their translations spoke positively, even when the missionary commentary undermined them.

7

BUDDHISM'S GLORIOUS CORE

Turnour's allies

> Buddhism is essentially a philosophical religion. Its virtue is meditation, and its perfection an entire victory over the senses and passions.
>
> (Knighton 1845a: 338)

George Turnour's work on the historical chronicles hovers as hidden presence behind the main writers of this section, Major Jonathon Forbes and William Knighton. Their passion was to discover a pure, reified Buddhism that would do justice to what they saw as the stormy but impressive history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and this cannot be understood without Turnour's inspiration. The difference between them and others in this wave is their handling of doctrines that were interpreted negatively by their contemporaries. Secondary to them was the barrister, Henry Charles Sirr (1807–1872), Queen's Advocate for the Southern Circuit of Ceylon and former Vice-Consul at Hong Kong. His presentation of Buddhism was almost entirely dependent on the writings of others, sometimes unacknowledged.[1] I will include him only when he adds something new.

Major Jonathon Forbes arrived in Sri Lanka in 1826 with the 78th Highlanders and, in 1829 was appointed Government Agent for Matale. A year after arrival, in February 1827, he travelled towards Adam's Peak and, at Ratnapura, spent several days with George Turnour (Forbes 1841, I: 165) in a life-changing meeting that inspired him to learn Sinhala and to seek confirmation of Sri Lanka's historical chronicles through exploring the yet undiscovered historical sites mentioned in them. Turnour eventually praised him for his zealousness in research and 'for the unreserved access' he had allowed Turnour to the results (Turnour 1836: 77).

Both Forbes and Turnour strove to contest imperialists who dismissed the Sri Lankan people and their history. It was a question of justice for them and, for Forbes, was not only about the past. In 1850 he wrote a pamphlet highlighting the problems of the Kandyan people before the 1848 rebellion, prompting Sirr to accuse him of, 'a very prejudiced mind' in his defence of the Kandyans and his criticism of the authorities (Sirr 1850, II: 7).

Forbes' major work, *Eleven Years in Ceylon*, published in 1841, draws deeply on the *Mahāvaṃsa* for historical background to such places as Kelaniya, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Hakgalle. He was not a Buddhist scholar, but he strove to understand the religion that undergirded his historical interest. His diligence was recognized by many.[2]

Forbes was directly connected with the colonial establishment, although he could be critical of it. William Knighton (d. 1900) was not. In 1843 he arrived in Sri Lanka as Headmaster of the Normal Seminary in Colombo, established to train teachers for vernacular schools. He soon resigned and turned to coffee planting in the Kandy District where he became a resident, part-proprietor of an estate. He did not remain in this long either but moved back to Colombo to join the staff of *The Ceylon Herald*, the rival to *The Observer*, probably in 1845. The paper was taken over by the *Ceylon Times* in the following year. Knighton eventually went to Calcutta to lecture in history and logic at Hindu College where he again became involved in journalism. In 1858, he was nominated to the Indian Civil Service and served for ten years. After his return to Britain, he became the Vice-President of the Royal Society of Literature in London and Vice-President of the International Literary and Artistic Society of Paris.

Knighton's scholarly interests in Sri Lanka were eclectic, with pride of place given to history, culture and religion. One of his gifts was an ability to place himself in the shoes of the 'other'. This can be seen in the paper he presented on Ceylonese literature, as Secretary of the newly formed RASCB. He began with unimaginative stereotypes of the East and West:

> Submission to despotism, politeness, mildness, obedience, religious fervour, and a glittering imagination, are the characteristics of the Asiatic world, and in these we find precisely the reverse of the gradual advance to democracy, the daring rudeness, the fondness for innovation, and the utilitarian ideas of the Europeans and their descendants, whatever part of the world they may inhabit.
>
> (Knighton 1845b: 29)

This said, however, he refused to offer what his listeners probably expected. Instead, he switched sides: 'the self-confident European declares the literature of Asia to be turgid and tedious, let him remember that an inhabitant of the latter continent will as confidently pronounce that of Europe to be tame and insipid' (Knighton 1845b: 30).

In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Forest Life in Ceylon*, Knighton moves to the 'other' side through the figure of Marandhan. Marandhan, Sinhala and Buddhist, is presented as a close friend of the author and equal intellectual partner. A good chunk of Volume II details his history. Marandhan could well have been a true friend of Knighton's. But he also functions symbolically, both through his biography and in a series of dialogues on religion, between the narrator and Marandhan, which are appendixed to the novel. The dialogues are fascinating.

For, although the Christian viewpoint is made to win, Marandhan's voice is forceful and critical. The dialogues in fact enable Knighton to hold up a mirror to the British, challenging their perspectives, including trust in Britain as civilization-bringer.[3] In *Tropical Sketches*, a later work on India, Knighton remembers Marandhan with these words:

> He would point out the hollowness of much that appeared outwardly honest and upright, but only so appeared because conventionalism had clothed it in its own robes, hiding the inward deformity with an external coating of proprieties that concealed, but could not remove, the heart-rottenness within.
>
> (Knighton 1855, I: 43)

Whether Marandhan was fiction or fact or a mixture of both, Knighton uses him to uncover much 'heart-rottenness' within the British imperial project.[4] The dialogues are also an intriguing expression of Knighton's interest in religion, faith and belief.[5]

Knighton, however, was not innocent of the attitudes Marandhan criticized.[6] For, although Knighton could mercilessly criticize the British, he nevertheless believed that history was placing the West in the ascendant and that the result would benefit Sri Lanka.[7] Marandhan's biography is crafted to show this. Marandhan's father, for instance, an army officer in the Kandyan Kingdom before 1815, is presented as vehemently opposed to British domination and Western culture. When he eventually dies in an attempt to kill his more Western-leaning son, it is Knighton's way of saying that the father's firmly nationalistic thinking and his refusal to tolerate foreign influence would be superseded. Combined with the belief that the East would ultimately benefit from the West, however, is the view that older cultural and identity-creating patterns should be preserved.

Buddhism: a rational religion

Upham, Adam Clarke and Gogerly, as well as Spence Hardy in his early writing, detected rationality within Buddhism but condemned it as a poor substitute for divine revelation. Forbes and Knighton consciously seek it out for praise. Missionaries, and civil servants such as Emerson Tennant, whose portrayal of Buddhism differed little from the missionaries,[8] searched Buddhism for what they could condemn as false. Forbes and Knighton sought for the noble. The two were united with some of their contemporaries, however, in their reluctance to accept at face value what contemporary Buddhists said they believed, preferring to privilege the texts.

The search for the noble led both to draw a distinction between what appeared pure and what appeared corrupt. So Forbes claims that Buddhist cosmology and narratives about the 'incarnations', or previous lives, of the Buddha are, 'an interminable labyrinth of absurdities seemingly without object and certainly without

amusement' (Forbes 1841, II: 197). But he dismisses this, in an Upham-like way, as non-Buddhist vestiges of an earlier aboriginal religion: 'I consider the whole system of gods to be quite unconnected with the religion of Gautama, and the superstitions of snake, demon and planetary worship he openly condemned' (Forbes 1841, II: 203–4). He takes refuge in the conviction that 'the works which contain the principles of Buddhism' can now be separated from the vapid and confused 'commentaries and discourses' (Forbes 1841, II: 206).

Knighton's approach is similar: there had been, 'interpolation, admixture and corruption' within the oral tradition (Knighton 1845a: 44). The main distinction he draws is between the 'esoteric' doctrine of the texts – 'a doctrine pure, patriarchal, and religious' – and the 'exoteric' doctrine with its 'attention to external ceremonies and unmeaning ordinances' (Knighton 1845a: 44), 'which are now too often mistaken for the inventions of Gotama himself' (Knighton 1845a: 81).

Nibbāna: blissful liberation

Neither Knighton nor Forbes could accept that a religion as widespread as Buddhism could have annihilation of existence at its heart, so they contested it, as an issue of justice. Forbes declares the view 'unjust to Buddhism and contrary to common sense' (Forbes 1841, II: 207). He suggests that the misreading could stem from the inadequacy of language. There may not be 'just equivalents in English, or the Buddhists in their vernacular languages, for the subtle expression Neerwana' (Forbes 1841, II: 207). In contrast, he imagines it as a state where the spirit is purified, freed from passion and from the body so that it becomes, 'an essence of purity and virtue' (Forbes 1841, II: 208). In support of this, he quotes part of Clough's overlooked definition, 'immortal, imperishable, unfading; freedom from death; the final emancipation of the soul from the body' (Forbes 1841, II: 207).

In Knighton's early writings, his interpretation of *nibbāna* is linked to his speculation that verse 154 of the *Dhammapada*, which speaks of the Buddha discovering an 'architect' or 'builder',[9] must imply a Supreme Being. In one paper, therefore, he surveys a range of possible meanings for *nibbāna* and opts for absorption into the soul of the universe: 'we must suppose the human soul to have been part of that being, as it certainly returned to him at death' (Knighton 1844: 351). His approach in the *History of Ceylon* repeats this (Knighton 1845a: 66), but he adds that if *nibbāna* is not absorption or 'an intimate union with that "architect" formerly referred to', then it must be 'an annihilation or nonentity' (Knighton 1845a: 73).

Knighton probably received a corrective to his reading of the *Dhammapada* from Spence Hardy, namely that the 'architect' is craving, not a Supreme Being (Spence Hardy 1844: 341–2) but he does not then follow his own logic. Neither does he give up the image of absorption. His use of Marandhan is significant. Never does Marandhan say that *nibbāna* is annihilation. In the first 'Dialogue' it is, 'perfect bliss and happiness' and the cessation of change, the

'summum bonum' achieved by the spirit and not by matter (Knighton 1854, II: 367). Then, in Dialogue Three, responding directly to the annihilation theory, Maradhan replies:

> Yet though *nirwana* is often spoken of as the cessation of everything that implies existence, yet this is not the impression universally prevalent amongst Budhists on the subject. They regard it as a thing to be desired; and if any definite ideas are entertained by any on the subject, they are probably summed up in that of absorption into the universal spirit.
>
> (Knighton 1854, II: 414)

In spite of this, Knighton can still call Buddhism, ' a system of negations' at one point (Knighton 1854, II: 51).[10]

The soul: myth or transmigrating entity

Neither Forbes nor Knighton, nor indeed Sirr, internalized Gogerly's research on *anattā*. All continued to use soul vocabulary. Sirr, for instance, suggests that capital punishment should be abolished for Buddhists or believers in transmigration of souls because it had no deterrent value. The convicted simply boasted that they would return as a cobra or demon to torment their oppressors. Rather than offer them that hope, perpetual slavery might be better, he declares (Sirr 1850, II: 243–6). No hint is given that belief in continuity after death was not authentic Buddhism.

Knighton is aware of Gogerly's research but chooses to dismiss it. As with the concepts of God and *nibbāna* in Buddhism, he is reluctant to accept what appears negative. In his early works, a strong dualism emerges. The soul is declared to have an 'absolute existence' in Buddhism (Knighton 1844: 351), and 'metempsychosis' to be one of Buddhism's distinguishing features (Knighton 1845a: 74). This does not change in later works; it is modified, through recognition of *anicca*, impermanence. So Marandhan insists that, in Buddhism, matter and spirit are eternal though, 'both subject to general laws by which they are ever changing' (Knighton 1854, II: 367). Gogerly's interpretation is relegated to a footnote. And there is no ridiculing of rebirth.

Craving and the Four Noble Truths

None of these writers itemize the Noble Truths, but their content is present, particularly in Knighton who declares early in his writings, 'Sin, misery and death were not always inhabitants of our planet, however, and they were produced, according to Buddhism, as according to a purer faith, by the desire, covetousness and folly of man' (Knighton 1845a: 69).[11] 'Sin, misery and death', the *dukkha* of the First Noble Truth, is further explored when the Marandhan dialogues turn to the teleological argument for the existence of God. Marandhan's difficulty as a

Buddhist is the existence of 'misery'. 'But as long as I see one animal the prey of another', he is shown to declare, 'as long as I see pain and grief and death, and madness in the world, I cannot believe in such a designer' (Knighton 1854, II: 369). Marandhan eventually comes closer to accepting the existence of God but not that this God could be good:

> But when you add infinite goodness, my mind revolts from the idea, conscious as I am of what goes on around me, and of what worse exists elsewhere in the world . . . Infinite power might call such a world into existence, but infinite goodness would assuredly refrain. When, in contemplation, the misery of which millions would be the victims, the disease, crime, sorrow, punishment, despair, and death, which would pervade it, arose before the Divine Mind, – would infinite goodness sanction such a scheme?
>
> (Knighton 1854, II: 429)

Knighton here recognizes *dukkha* as a crucial issue in the encounter between Buddhists and Christians, in a dialogue that has a surprisingly contemporary ring.

Whether Knighton saw Buddhism making a direct, causal link between the ending of sorrow and the destruction of its cause is not clear. In general, he followed the normative contemporary view that 'merit and demerit' controlled the universe in a process of cause and effect, and here he was willing to draw on missionaries such as Spence Hardy (Spence Hardy 1850: 5; Knighton 1854, II: 49). He also mentions some parts of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) chain, but this is in the context of the definition of ignorance and the question of a Supreme Being rather than the destruction of craving or misery (Knighton 1845a: 68).

Buddhist ethics: the glorious core

For the writers of this chapter, the excellence of Buddhism is its moral teaching. They join hands with earlier writers in this but only Upham pre-empts them for ethics is not marginalized but placed at the centre as Buddhism's defining characteristic. And there are few qualifications. Gogerly and Spence Hardy's data might be used, but not their spin.

Forbes asserts that Buddhism is essentially, 'contemplative, humane, peaceful and regulated by plain moral laws' (Forbes 1841, II: 211), 'the excellence and simplicity of which may astonish those who have only heard it [Buddhism] mentioned to be condemned as an impure, cruel unintelligible portion of Paganism' (Forbes 1841, I: 305). He gives many examples: opposition to caste, bloody sacrifice and Brahminical privilege (Forbes 1841, II: 211); discouragement of 'animal passions', forbidding of slavery, denouncing of warlike kings and quarrelsome individuals (Forbes 1841, II: 198); 'just conduct' that involves the practice of active virtues such as honest livelihood, reverencing priests, giving

alms and forgiving injuries, and abstention from wrongdoing such as the worship of false gods, adultery, false language, destroying living beings, selling flesh and trading in deadly weapons or poisons (Forbes 1841, I: 305–6). Significantly, compassionate action as well as refraining from the unwholesome is stressed, and the Buddha's teaching is shown to be relevant to practical social issues. Furthermore, as Forbes describes his travels, it becomes obvious that he sees this morality in practice, for example the unwillingness of the people to kill animals in sacred places such as Adam's Peak (Forbes 1841, I: 171) or Anuradhapura (Forbes 1841, I: 218).

Even when Forbes withdraws from wholehearted approval, he adds qualifications:

> That despots professing the religion of Buddha have been often cruel, cannot be denied; that its admirable laws have little power to control his nominal followers, may be admitted; yet it is unfair to charge Buddhism with the crimes of those who disobey its injunctions, defy its commandments, and dare its threats of future punishment.
>
> (Forbes 1841, I: 305)

As for Knighton, in *History of Ceylon*, he adamantly, perhaps defiantly, declares that it is the moral code of Buddhism rather than gods or cosmology that will form the basis of his exposition (Knighton 1845a: 69). Why? The clue is in his later work: the ethics of Buddhism gives the religion its highest value in Christian eyes (Knighton 1854, II: 53). The *Dhammapada* is one of his favourite texts. Its verses appear in both his main works on Sri Lanka, using Gogerly's translation. His selection concentrates on such things as conquering evil with good, subduing the passions, mildness of speech and the danger of anger and hatred (Knighton 1845a: 77–80; Knighton 1854, II: 23–4).[12] In *The History of Ceylon*, the *Maṅgala Sutta*[13] is also quoted, but it is in *Forest Life in Ceylon* that the greatest variety of texts appear, most of them taken from Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*. And again it is the selection that is important. There is the narrative of the missionary monk who vows that he will meet even death without retaliation or hatred (Knighton 1854, II: 18)[14] and that of Upāli, the Jain, who is advised to continue giving to the Jains even after conversion to the Buddha's path.[15] The benevolence of the Buddha is stressed through extracts from 'The Questions of Milinda' (Knighton 1854, II: 19–20).[16] Moving to lay morality, the *Pūjāvaliya* is used for information on the five precepts and material obviously from the *Sigālovāda* and *Sāleyyaka Suttas* for a discussion on 'sins' and duties.[17]

Knighton's selection presents Buddhism as having something to offer nineteenth-century moral discourse. He dismisses the missionary accusation that Buddhist morality is ineffectual through Marandhan, who accuses the missionaries of looking upon all 'heathen creeds with a jaundiced eye' (Knighton 1854, II: 415) and replaces it with an affirmation that Buddhism 'appears to come next to Christianity in its civilizing and humanizing influence' (Knighton 1854, II: 416).

Sirr is equally positive about Buddhist morality, but draws mainly on the words of others.[18] There is one, moving, original story. Sirr visits Dondra Head, the southernmost tip of Sri Lanka, where a Buddhist monk tells him about the visit of some foreigners decades past. When the foreigners came ashore, the monk narrates, he offered them green coconuts and fruit but received only derision in return. He continued, 'I turned away in sorrow, as I had learned a sad lesson, *for I found that all men did not understand kindness*' (Sirr 1850, 11: 323). The visitors then went to the temple and handled sacred objects roughly. They left but returned later to steal the carved entrance gates to the temple, wrenching them from the framework with harsh implements, overcoming the resistance of monks and lay people. The monk found himself cursing the intruders and calling the Buddha for vengeance. Vengeance in the form of a storm came that night and the ship was destroyed. Sirr records the words of the monk:

> Buddha had avenged his cause; but I, his servant, was very sorrowful, as I thought upon those in distant lands, who would watch in vain from sunrise to sunset for the return of the strong men, who had gone forth full of health and hope in that goodly ship – and I grieved, that I had cursed the strangers in my wrath, when they plundered our god's temple, and scoffed at me, his lowly slave.
>
> (Sirr 1850, II: 325–6)

The Buddha: credible and human

Forbes, dismissing those elements that seem to him absurd (Forbes 1841, II: 197), declares the records of Gotama to be both credible and historically plausible (Forbes 1841, II: 200). The biography he gives is bare, although the Buddha's three visits to Sri Lanka, as recorded in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, are described in detail, as fact (Forbes 1841, II: 201–3). The mission of the Buddhas is presented as 'regeneration' and 'restoration' of religion (Forbes 1841, II: 195). 'Reform' is not used, neither is the vocabulary of divinity. Forbes denies that the Buddha image, for instance, is worshipped; it is rather to, 'recall more forcibly the founder of their religion to the minds of its votaries' (Forbes 1841, II: 208).

The key to Knighton's interpretation of the Buddha is that he was a human teacher and a prophet/reformer. His most detailed treatment comes in *Forest Life in Ceylon*, where he attempts an imaginative reconstruction of the Buddha's mission that touches Spence Hardy in method but not content. He begins by asserting the historicity of Gotama, referring to his 'extraordinary career of preaching and teaching' (Knighton 1854, II: 3). A detailed life story follows with a liberal dose of the miraculous. But this does not hide his own conviction that the biography was about a young man of 29 years voluntarily renouncing luxury:

> To acquire a reputation for sanctity by solitary meditation and a hermit's life, and then issuing forth from that forest at thirty five, to preach down

> the most terrible and pernicious of systems – Brahmanism; using no other weapons but those of precept and example, and, like our Saviour himself, wandering fearlessly amongst hosts of enemies, denouncing their wickedness and folly!
>
> (Knighton 1854, II: 6)

In 1845, Knighton had declared that Gotama's mission was 'reforming the world and establishing his own deityship' (Knighton1845a: 8). By the 1850s, as this quote shows, Knighton has reduced this to a fight against Brahmanism. Further on Knighton imagines the Buddha saying: 'I may lose my life, but what brave man was ever restrained from doing what he wished by that consideration? I will attempt the reformation at all events, let what will come' (Knighton 1854, II: 11).[19]

The enlightenment is then pictured quite traditionally as a contest with demons, in which the Buddha gained omnipotence and omniscience so that he arose 'with all the characteristics of a god' (Knighton 1854, II: 13). Yet Knighton speculates that what happened in reality might simply have been that the Buddha emerged from his asceticism as a reformer and, wishing to make his message more acceptable, strategically declared himself one of a long line of teachers with an ancient message. Thus Knighton attributes to the Buddha 'craftiness and wile as necessary weapons' in his prophetic zeal (Knighton 1854, II: 14).

Sirr draws both on Davy and Knighton. His Buddha biography is a moving, imaginative account far more lengthy than others in this chapter. For instance, Gotama's marriage is given in great detail, a son appearing nine months and three days afterwards, and the conversation between Gotama and Channa, his manservant, at renunciation, becomes a lengthy story touched with pathos. Yet his assessment is similar to them:

> Although reason convinces us there is much fable intermixed in the account of his birth and life, still historical facts prove that the son of a powerful monarch did abandon his throne, and, in the full vigour of health, manhood, and intellect, became a wandering pauper, roaming from place to place, inculcating piety and virtue. Can we feel astonished that the being called by the Cingalese *Goutama Buddha* is looked upon as a prophet and worshipped as a god?
>
> (Sirr 1850, II: 85–6)

Contemporary decline

In spite of their conviction that Buddhism had a rational and positive core, Forbes and Knighton nevertheless agreed that Buddhism in Sri Lanka was declining. This is where their vocabulary touched that of the missionaries and less scholarly memoir writers.

For Forbes, former splendour had been lost as if the very race that established such glory had perished (Forbes 1841, I: 241). The contrast between the ruined

cities and the modern temples, he declares, serves 'to prove that Buddhism only clings with loosening grasp, where it once held sovereign sway over mind and matter' (Forbes 1841, I: 239). The 'present intricate system is like rubbish which has accumulated round a great but decaying fabric of religion' (Forbes 1841, II: 198).

Forbes' fear was that what he termed 'rubbish' was gaining the upper hand (Forbes 1841, I: 29; 1841, II:194). He witnesses a *Bali* ceremony, sees it as distinct from Buddhism, recognizes its hold over the people, and surmises that Buddhism will fall and demonology continue before Christianity has time to step in (Forbes 1841, I: 291). He accuses shrine priests (*kapurālās*) of deceiving the people (Forbes 1841, I: 321), mentioning those who oppose smallpox vaccinations in order to safeguard their remuneration from ceremonies to the goddess Pattini (Forbes 1841, I: 354).

Knighton believed that a direct correspondence could be drawn between the purity of a religion and the nobility of the civilization that nurtured it (Knighton 1845a: 65). Since the Sri Lankan nation had declined in greatness, his conclusion was that Buddhism had declined. More consistently than Forbes, he communicates this symbolically through representing Buddhism in practice as antiquated, static, rather romantic and in need of new energy from modern developments. His description of monks at Anuradhapura is a good example. They glide round, 'redolent of buried centuries, of an age and of a faith worn out and exhausted. Noiselessly do they glide along, exhibiting no interest in you, or your white face' (Knighton 1854, II: 141). Part of this decline, he surmises, is due to the assimilation of beliefs alien to original Buddhism and he sees evidence of this as early as Robert Knox's account of the Kandyan Kingdom.[20]

Concluding thoughts

A postcolonial scholar might dismiss Forbes and Knighton as quintessential orientalists in their dismissal of contemporary religion, their glorification of the past and their privileging of the texts. I would prefer to look at them in context and in contest, using Abeysekara's idea of 'contingent formations of identity and difference' (Abeyesekera 2002: 15). The contingent formations in mid-nineteenth-century Sri Lanka included the missionary construction of Buddhism and Turnour's research. Forbes and Knighton, influenced by these, brought the tool of justice to cut through what they saw as injustice. And they used the scholarship of the missionaries to undercut the missionaries, a method that would later be used by Buddhists themselves.

Part III

1870–1900

8

INTRODUCTION

1870: a moment in time

1870 stands in the centre of a significant period in Sri Lankan religious and political history and at the beginning of some important scholarly developments in the West. Many of the British people who wrote about Buddhism in the middle decades are no longer around. Gogerly and Spence Hardy are dead. Knighton and James Chapman have left the country. Barcroft Boake is no longer at the Colombo Academy. Some of those who will influence the latter part of the century are just beginning their work or being formed. Robert Childers, having retired from the Ceylon Civil Service, is working on his Pāli Dictionary in England. T.W. Rhys Davids is still a civil servant in Sri Lanka but will leave in 1872.

In Europe, Viggo Fausböll is in correspondence with the venerable Vaskaḍuvē Subhūti of Sri Lanka over procuring manuscripts for his six-volume edition of the *Jātaka*. His English edition of the *Sutta Nipāta* will appear in 1881. Max Muller is still residing in Oxford and will do so until his death in 1900. His major work, editing the *Sacred Books of the East* series, to include his own translation of the *Dhammapada*, is underway. Hermann Oldenburg, who would become one of the most prolific Western writers on Buddhist and Vedic themes, is just 16 years old. In 1881, his *Buddha: sein Leben seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde* (The Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Community) will appear, to be translated into English, French and Russian.[1] And other scholars who will be influenced by Buddhism in Sri Lanka are not yet out of school. Karl Eugen Neumann and Paul Dahlke are just 5 and Willhelm Geiger, 14.[2]

In 1870, the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity is taxing some philosophers. Paul Carus, a German resident in America, will make a devastating attack on those who stress the nihilism of Buddhism, in his own search for a universal philosophy, combining the best insights of both Buddhism and Christianity.[3] Arthur Lillie will publish several highly speculative works on the esoteric symbolism held in common by Christianity and Buddhism – an approach that will produce interpretations of the two religions unrecognizable to their followers![4] Theologians such as Archibald Scott are willing to admit that Christians may have something to learn from Buddhists (Clarke 1997: 83). But, by 1870, in

Rhys Davids' words, 'only two Pāli texts of any size and importance had appeared in editions accessible to scholars in the West' (Rhys Davids 1896: 50).[5]

1830–1900: transition and development

In these last decades of the century, with a growing movement of 'freethinkers' in Europe and America, expanding scholarly research, greater popular awareness of Buddhism and the influence of less exclusivist Christian thinking, almost every representation of Buddhism by Westerners in England and Sri Lanka has its challenger, with a marked, vociferously voiced polarization between negative and positive interpretations. Key to the popularization of Buddhism was Edwin Arnold's poem, *The Light of Asia*, published in 1879. Popular novels, such as Marie Corelli's *A Romance of Two Worlds* and Rider Haggard's *Ayesha* were also drawing on Eastern religious themes (Franklin 2003). And the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 meant that casual visitors and tourists were able to travel East and bring back their stories. Whereas in 1837 post took 90–100 days to travel between England and Sri Lanka, in 1887, it took 18 (Dickson 1889: 17). And whereas in the first half of the century, Europeans working in Sri Lanka knew that home visits would be decades apart, after 1870, one every five or six years could be anticipated. For all these reasons, the third wave of British visitors to Sri Lanka was even less homogenous than the second.

Britain: Benefactor or oppressor?

During this period, most of the British in Sri Lanka continued to cite the benefits of British administration. John Ferguson's directories or yearbooks are a good example.[6] In *Ceylon in 1883*, he gave a statistical list of changes between 1815 and 1883, which included the following table.

	1815	*1883*
Population	750,000–1,000,000	2,850,000
No. of houses	20,000 (tiled)	477,917
Population of capital	28,000	120,000
Roads	Sand and gravel tracks	1,301 – metalled 885 – gravelled 622 – natural

Source: J. Ferguson 1883: 11.

This was followed by comments such as this:

> In no direction has more satisfactory work been done in Ceylon by the British Government than through its Medical and Educational Departments. Here are branches which give the natives a vivid idea of

> the superiority of English over Portuguese or Dutch rule, and the Sinhalese and Tamils value their privileges accordingly.
>
> (J. Ferguson 1883: 28)

Sri Lanka, Ferguson declared, was 'an El Dorado' for the Tamil 'coolie' from India, working on the tea plantations, 'for each family could there earn from 9s to 12s per week, and save from half to three quarters the amount' (J. Ferguson 1883: 84).[7] His one criticism of the commercial system was that capitalists in Britain, rather than local expatriate capitalists, had benefited from the plantations. And he had advice for the government. More resources could be put into education. Law reform was needed, and revenue from Buddhist temporalities should be used to benefit the people. His conclusion, nevertheless, was that nowhere in the British Empire were there more loyal and contented subjects (J. Ferguson 1883: 133).[8]

Voices that challenged the picture of Britain as saviour were also present. I.B. Clarence, Judge of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, for instance, refused to indulge in self-glorifying phrases when writing a chapter for *The British Empire Series*. Whether Sri Lanka had benefited from British presence, he wrote, cannot 'be answered in a few cheap and easy phrases about the blessings of British civilisation' (Clarence 1899: 447). There had been material advantages in the giving of roads, hospitals and education, he admitted, but there had been disadvantages in the growth of alcohol consumption and gambling, and a legal system that failed to effect justice. Leonard Woolf (1880–1969) civil servant, went further. In his novel, *The Village in the Jungle* (Woolf 1913), he exposed both the harshness of rural poverty and the inadequacy of the colonial judicial system.[9]

In addition, some theosophists, freethinkers and converts to Buddhism were beginning to attack the heart of the imperial project. In the writing of the venerable Ananda Metteyya, British Buddhist monk, the gaze is turned away from Asia to the spiritual poverty of the West. It is the West that he condemns as morally and spiritually weak, and Buddhism, the force that could rescue it.

Sri Lanka as object

The tendency towards romanticism present in the middle years of the century mushroomed in this period. Of the writers I cover, the aristocratic Constance Gordon Cumming is the best example. Yet, her mode of perceiving represented an entire class of travellers. This is Augusta Klein, SPG supporter, when stopping in Sri Lanka on the way to India:

> This is that Kingdom of the Lion round which are gathered so many wonderful myths of immemorial Buddhist tradition. Of old, in the long-past days, no human beings lived therein, but spirits and serpent-princes; and theirs was all the countless wealth of this the Sorrowless Land.[10]
>
> (Klein 1895: 5)

The illustrated souvenirs of Henry Cave, designed for British people with relatives and friends in Sri Lanka, appealed to this genus. Not for Cave, Samuel Baker's vision of the colonization of Sri Lanka's wild open spaces. He preferred the 'picturesque', feeding the British with a picture of their own nobility, within an exotic country, in which a fascinating rather than a horrific barbarism lurked. But his approach was not completely new. These descriptions of rural life go back to Cordiner:

> Here is the perfection of village life; the people lay themselves down to rest upon their palm-leaf mats, spread upon the bare ground, with the palm-thatch above them, happy and peaceful in the knowledge that over and around them grows an abundant supply of all their needs.
>
> (Cave 1894: 81–2)

The romanticism of the latter decades of the century was less connected with an intoxication with power than with the construction of a stereotypical picture of the exotic. Comparisons between the greyness of Britain and the vibrant colour and warmth of the 'tropics' began to fuel an embryonic tourist industry. And, as in the middle years, one tendency that flowed from this was that Buddhism became an object to be romanticized rather than a religion to be understood.

The main challengers of this romantic distortion were the missionaries, who painted a picture of utter degradation among rural communities untouched by Christianity. They were joined by some theosophists and Buddhist scholars. The theosophist P. Holly, for instance, was capable of throwing at the Sinhala people sermons of chastisement. When dealing with caste, he accused them of having no 'brotherly' love, adding 'Shame on you Sinhalese! Are you worthy of your beautiful Island, benign government and noble religion?' (Holly 1889a: 299).

Receivers or givers

The stereotype through which Sri Lankans were characterized as indolent persisted in these years[11] but a growing number contested it, including SPG missionary, Philip Marks. In 'A Plea for the Singhalese People', he argued, with examples of Sinhala activism and compassion, that what was branded indolence, even stupidity, was in fact an attempt to keep passion in check (Marks 1881: 119). T.W. Rhys Davids took another line: the deconstruction of the 'immovability' of the East stereotype:

> The supposed immovability of the institutions and beliefs of the East has become almost a proverb: but as our knowledge of the East increases, the proverb will be likely to fall into disuse. There have been times, not far remote, when the rate of progress in India or China has been so slow, that, compared with the progress in England or America, it has seemed

> as nothing; but there have been times when Eastern Asia has moved faster than Europe. Except in a much more limited sense than the expression is usually meant to convey, 'the immovability of the East' is a delusion.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1894: 178)

Parallel to this was the insistence that India and Sri Lanka had given literature to the West. Sir William Jones stressed it, Upham glimpsed it and Knighton's respect for Marandhan had implied it. But with Rhys Davids and Max Muller (1823–1900), it gained greater momentum. Muller, for instance, gave courses to candidates for the Indian Civil Service. In a lecture given in 1882, he contested the prejudice that condemned Indian culture as merely 'curious'. Stressing the rich humanity within Indian literature, he claimed that it could provide a corrective, 'to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal' (Muller 1899: 6). He argued that the West had already drawn from the East – 'Buddhism is now known to have been the principal source of our legends and parables' (Muller 1899: 9) – and that research had shown the peoples of India and Europe had a common origin. 'All that we value most has come to us from the East', he continued. The person going there from Europe, 'ought to feel that he is going to his "old home", full of memories, if only he can read them' (Muller 1899: 31).

This strain of romantic scholarship was combined in a stereotypically orientalist way with the conviction that Western research could correct deviations within Asia's contemporary religious practice. For Muller never visited India and judged contemporary Hinduism, degenerate, believing that the West could reform it (Sugirtharajah 2003: 40–1).

The religious context: polarization

F.D. Maurice in the later years of the century continued to inspire Christians who were reluctant to link other religions with depravity (Cracknell 1995: 35–59, 107–80). His influence lies behind these words of Archdeacon Farrar's given at the opening of a symposium on the relationship of non-Christian systems to Biblical Theology: 'We are prepared, then, to see the light of God shining even in the heathen. In the sacred books of the East there are many lovely and holy thoughts, many flashes of subtle insight, many trains of profound speculation' (Farrar 1887: 12).[12]

Views such as this paved the way for the fulfilment theory – that Christianity was the fulfilment of other religions in the same way as Jesus claimed to fulfil the Jewish Law. Other religions were seen either as containing a modicum of truth that could be fulfilled through Christianity or as preparing the way for Christianity. So Edwin Arnold, in his poem on Jesus, *The Light of the World*, presented Christianity as adding extra value to the truths of Buddhism. Whether this represented his personal conviction is not the issue here.[13] And Ernest Eitel,

missionary in Hong Kong and China, could praise the enthusiasm of the early Buddhist missionaries, but only because they laid the foundation for subsequent Christian mission (Eitel 1873: 32–3).

The majority of supporters of missionary work, however, did not agree with Maurice and Farrar. Sir Monier Monier-Willliams (1819–1899), for instance, addressing a British Church Missionary Society (CMS) meeting in 1887, claimed that he had once been lured by the fulfilment theory because of the riches he had found in the scriptures of other religions. Yet, this had been a mistake, he robustly declared: 'a limp, flabby, jelly-fish kind of tolerance' towards other religious systems was a contradiction of the attitude of Jesus himself. 'There can be no greater mistake' he warned, than forcing non-Christian texts into an evolutionary theory with the Bible as the 'crowning product'. All non-Christian scriptures begin 'with some flashes of true light and end in darkness'.[14]

In Sri Lanka, restraint, tolerance, even affirmation of some aspects of Buddhism can be detected in missionary writings. An anonymous writer in *The Ceylon Church Journal* (*CCJ*), for instance, could claim that, 'It would be idle . . . to assert dogmatically that there is not a particle of God's truth in the doctrines promulgated by Sakya Muni or Mahommed . . . '[15] And a year later, an editorial in *The Ceylon Diocesan Gazette* (*CDG*) declared:

> But to preach, as some Missionaries do, the doctrine (Calvinist it may be, but certainly not Christian and Catholic) – that God has doomed the majority of men to everlasting torment – that is not the Gospel – nor is such teaching likely to commend Christianity to the heathen, and Buddhists will not improbably conclude that their own system offers them as equal hope for the future.
>
> ('The Constructive versus the Destructive Method of Teaching Religious Truth', *CDG*, 4 May 1878: 109)

Some Christian schools reflected this mood. By 1879, non-baptized children in SPG schools were exempt from the religious instruction of those who were baptized. Separate schools were even envisaged so that the 'unbaptized' should not be present when Christians were praying.[16] But what was given with one hand was taken away with another. The *CCJ* writer quoted above later stated that the light of Christianity was greater than that of Buddhism or Islam, and condemned the Buddhist view that life was 'joyless'.[17] And the writer in the *CDG* condemned hell-fire preaching only to commend another formula: showing non-Christians that their truths are partial and that Christian truth alone can 'modify the distorted truths found in their own heathen system'.[18]

Urgency was given to this less accommodating message by the slow church growth at this time. Between 1870 and 1900, the number of Christians remained at between 9 and 10 per cent of the population,[19] in spite of the arrival of new Christian groups, the Salvation Army in 1885–1886 and the Quakers in 1896.

The consolidation of revival

Internal Christian debates played themselves out against a backdrop of growing opposition to Christian hegemony in Britain and a Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka. By 1870, members of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha such as Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṃgala and Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda had already appropriated some Christian missionary methods in the defence of Buddhism and were reading Western freethinkers such as Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891).[20] Debates had begun between members of the Sangha and Christians, the most famous coming in 1873, in Panadura. It was only after news of this reached the West that external aid for the revival came, from Western freethinkers, theosophists and converts to Buddhism.

The census results illustrate this. In 1891, 1 male and 1 female European registered themselves as Buddhists. In 1901, the number had increased to 8 male and 11 female Europeans. Some of these had originally been influenced by *The Light of Asia*. For instance, Charles F. Powell, a theosophist who played a prominent part in Sri Lanka from 1889 to 1890, claimed that the poem, 'came on the West like a revelation of perfect truth – the account of a perfect life expressed in perfect verse' (Powell 1889: 330). Significant also is that 66 males and 74 females from the traditionally Christian Burgher community of Sri Lanka, those who claimed Dutch and Portuguese ancestry, also claimed to be Buddhist in 1901.

The end of the nineteenth century is a neat cut-off point. But it cannot do justice to the dynamic of religious change. For instance, at the very end of the century, two British men who would be ordained as Buddhist monks were in Sri Lanka. The first was Gordon Douglas, who was ordained in Colombo in 1899 and died in Myanmar in 1905. The second was Charles Henry Allan Bennett, who was ordained in Myanmar in 1901 as Ananda Metteyya. The last part of this chapter is devoted to him. Strictly speaking, his writing falls in the twentieth century but its roots lie in the nineteenth, for, as Powell, he was first directed towards Buddhism by *The Light of Asia*. It is with Edwin Arnold, therefore, that this part starts.

9

THE BUDDHA AS HERO

Arnold's *The Light of Asia*

> [T]he Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing – no single act or word – which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr.
>
> (Preface to *The Light of Asia*, Arnold 1902: viii)

With these words and the later assertion that the goal of the Buddhist Path could not be nothingness (Arnold 1902: xi), Arnold (1832–1904) laid down the lines of contest for the end of the century. Although Forbes and Knighton had said much the same, he, not they, became the touchstone for the ongoing debate. All those who wrote after Arnold were forced either to contest or echo him.

Why did *The Light of Asia* captivate both the West and Asia? For Arnold was given an effusive welcome when he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1886[1] and the relationship did not sour as it did for some theosophists.[2] I would suggest it was because Arnold offered the reader a Buddha who embodied the most loved, devotion-inspiring human qualities such as compassion, modesty and sensitivity, and also a romantically appealing interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, just as they were entering Western consciousness.

A perfect life

The poem begins with the Buddha-to-be in the heavens seeing five signs that signify his birth on earth as Prince Siddhartha. When his mother conceives, the universe responds in empathy and joy. Much is made of the father's attempts to protect Siddhartha from all intimations of pain so that he would not renounce his kingly destiny. The romance between Prince Siddhartha and Yasodhara is then glowingly described. She is the only beauty he falls for out of many. He wins her through martial skill in a contest that highlights his compassion as well as his strength (Arnold 1902: 23–5). At the marriage, 'love was all in all' (Arnold 1902: 27). Next comes Siddhartha's awakening to life's pain. He holds a dying

man, his empathetic nature cut to the quick. He witnesses a cremation and is taught about rebirth. He realizes the full import of human suffering:

> Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
> Glowed with the burning passion of a love
> Unspeakable, the ardour of a hope
> Boundless, insatiable: 'Oh! suffering world;
> Oh! known and unknown of my common flesh,
> Caught in this common net of death and woe,
> And life which binds to both!'
>
> (Arnold 1902: 51)

Human yearning, conflict and struggle are central to this part. Never does Arnold accuse Siddhartha of indifference to his wife. The Buddha's greatness, according to Arnold, lay in his choice to respond to a love wider than his family: 'the way of good' for the world (Arnold 1902: 61). It is presented as a sacrifice rooted in pity for that world (Arnold 1902: 61). He is seen convincing his wife, 'that I loved thee most, because I loved so well all living souls' (Arnold 1902: 60).

To convey the Buddha's enlightenment, Arnold draws on Western images of arcadia and paradise regained, and on Eastern narrative tradition of humans healed, animals living in harmony, evil becoming good. This is the culmination of the stronger love in the Buddha's life. Yet, significantly, the object of the other love is not forgotten. The climax of the biographical part of the poem is not the founding of monastic orders or the Buddha's death, but the Buddha's reunion, as an enlightened teacher, with his father and Yasodhara. The poem ends with a sermon given by the Buddha, with Rahula, his son, between his knees and Yasodhara at his feet, laying her hand on his hands and wrapping his yellow robe around her shoulder (Arnold 1902: 135).

This combination of romance, heroism, compassion and absolute goodness would be a hard-to-resist formula today. Even the missionaries were to be moved by it.

What the Buddha taught

The doctrinal themes of the poem are the suffering of life, the causes of this suffering and the way of escape, in other words the Four Noble Truths. The Truths themselves, however, are only mentioned twice, in the description of the enlightenment and in the final sermon. At the enlightenment, for instance, the fourth watch holds the awareness of the 'first of the Noble Truths': 'how Sorrow is Shadow to life, moving where life doth move . . . ' (Arnold 1902: 110). The final sermon repeats this: the universe is, 'A mighty whirling wheel of strife and stress' (Arnold 1902: 138); 'Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony' (Arnold 1902: 147).

Gogerly and Spence Hardy could have written this. But Arnold did not remain there. He insisted that the message of the Truths was optimistic, one of the first British people connected with Sri Lanka to do so.

An important theme for Arnold was that one of the causes of suffering was a false view of self. It was not non-self that Arnold stressed but the false self that emphasized separateness from all else, rather than interconnectedness.[3] And a false view of self led to a false view of the world (Arnold 1902: 148). Part of the Buddhist spiritual path, according to Arnold, was, therefore, to purge, 'The lie and lust of self from the blood' (Arnold 1902: 144). The first of the ten fetters, translated as 'sins', becomes in the poem, 'love of self' (Arnold 1902: 152) rather than delusion of self. Possibly drawing from Sanskrit Hindu literature, he claims that, for the enlightened person, 'Foregoing self, the Universe grows "I" ' (Arnold 1902: 153).

Kamma, action, was also central to Arnold's representation. The poem links it both with relentlessness and love, the two meanings held together in an ambiguity masked by poetic license. It is, 'The fixed arithmetic of the universe' giving good for good and evil for evil (Arnold 1902: 86). But it is also likened to a beneficent power that pushes beings along an upward evolutionary path towards purity. In one passage, *kamma* seems to merge with *dhamma* and both are personified in language more appropriate to a Supreme Being.[4] To work with this personified force, the poem declares, humans have to begin to live by righteousness, in the realization that humanity has no fate except what it makes for itself.[5] At one significant point, *kamma* also seems to become 'soul'. Arnold speaks of eradicating passions and adds:

> till all the sum of ended life –
> The *Karma* – all that total of a soul
> Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
> The 'Self' it wove – with woof of viewless time…
> Grows pure and sinless; either never more
> Needing to find a body and a place,
> Or so informing what fresh frame it takes
> In new existence that the new toils prove
> Lighter and lighter not to be at all,
> Thus 'finishing the Path;' free from all Earth's cheats;
> Released from the Skandhas of the flesh…
> Until – greater than kings, than Gods more glad! –
> The aching craze to live ends, and life glides –
> Lifeless – to nameless, quiet, nameless joy,
> Blessed NIRVANA – sinless, stirless rest –
> The change that never changes!
>
> (Arnold 1902: 111–12)

Nibbāna – ***a positive goal***

The poem offers differing images of *nibbāna*, poetic expression again masking ambiguity. The dominant message is that *nibbāna* lies outside human categories,

and that it involves both destruction and continuity. The passage above, for instance, holds together *nibbāna* as 'sinless, stirless rest' and as lifelessness. Just as the passage is ambivalent over what the 'soul' consists of, so life and no-life are held together in *nibbāna*. Later, the same juxtaposition reappears:

> Unto NIRVANA: He is one with Life,
> Yet lives not. He is blest, ceasing to be.
> OM MANI PADME, OM! the Dewdrop slips
> Into the shining sea!
> (Arnold 1902: 145)

Later, Arnold goes further in seeing *nibbāna* as a mystery that holds together life and no-life but answers to neither:

> If any teach NIRVANA is to cease
> Say unto such they lie
> If any teach NIRVANA is to live
> Say unto such they err.
> (Arnold 1902: 153)

An activist path

Arnold's Buddhist path is an activist one. Meditation is not mentioned, neither is 'suppression' of the emotions. One progression offered to readers is as follows: (1) 'Learning whence woe springs'; (2) striving to pay for ancient evils in love and truth; (3) purifying oneself of the lie of self; (4) rendering for wrong nothing but grace and good; (5) living merciful, holy, just, kind and true lives; and (6) destroying desire so that love of life ends (Arnold 1902: 144–5).

In the final sermon, only the first four parts of the Eight Fold Path are described and each is given an activist spin. For instance, *sammā sankappa* (right intention) is described as having goodwill to all that lives and 'letting unkindness die' (Arnold 1902: 150). The last four stages are dismissed as only for renunciants, presented as 'Right Purity, Right Thought, Right Loneliness and Right Rapture' (Arnold 1902: 150).

Also significant is that Arnold stressed that the Buddha opposed social evils such as animal sacrifice and caste distinctions. Before his enlightenment, Siddhartha is seen stopping the sacrificial slaughter of sheep in a passage that emphasizes the Buddha's choice for compassionate action rather than meditation (Arnold 1902: 85–7). Then, at Bodhgaya, Arnold shows him contesting caste restrictions when a low caste shepherd boy hesitates to give Siddhartha goat's milk in case his touch would defile (Arnold 1879: 93). The only inconsistent note within this reformist agenda is that Siddhartha raises no objection when a woman shows a willingness to immolate herself on her husband's pyre (Arnold 1902: 99–100).

Concluding remarks

The strength of the *The Light of Asia* lay in its power to evoke. Ambiguities that would have been unacceptable within a scholarly work merge. The rationality of Buddhism is scarcely mentioned except in one significant line: ‘Ye that will tread the Middle Road, whose course Bright Reason traces and soft Quiet smoothes’ (Arnold 1902: 146).[6] And it was in this power to evoke that its influence lay, a power that spoke of insider commitment, the ‘emic’ rather than the ‘etic’.[7] After Arnold, the contours were changed for anyone writing about Buddhism.

10

BUDDHISM AS NIHILISM

The missionary perspective

Missionaries in Sri Lanka were faced with a new situation in these later decades characterized by a more aggressive Buddhist Revival, the consequences of Arnold's poem and anti-Christian Western free-thought movements. Yet, the scholarly missionary writings they turned to either belonged to the century's middle years or were identical in content to those that did, with Robert Childers added to them.[1] The consequence was that the growing popularity in the West of what the missionaries saw as idealized constructions of Buddhism were met by an even stronger emphasis on Buddhism's nihilism and the prevalence of demon cults on the ground. Some were aware, through Arnold and theologians such as Maurice, that Buddhism could no longer be condemned as totally degraded. But this led either to straightforward inconsistency or to recanting if the sympathetic crept in. It also resulted in an intra-missionary dialogue on the limits to condemnation. In everyday contact with Buddhists, however, most missionaries were courteous and respectful.

Biographical information

Rev. Samuel Langdon, Rev. Thomas Moscrop, John Murdoch and Rev. Philip Marks are my main representatives. The first two were Methodists. The third was adopted as a missionary by the United Presbyterian Synod of Scotland after government employment. The last was an SPG missionary. Rev. J.W. Balding, CMS missionary and writer of the Centenary Volume of CMS, and Hugh Horsley, another CMS worker, are mentioned where appropriate. The Baptist voice is present in H.A. Lapham, missionary and ordained minister, and John Ferguson, nephew of A.M. Ferguson, who joined his uncle as work partner in 1863.

Langdon arrived in Sri Lanka in 1873 just before the Panadura Debate. He was the first Principal of Richmond College in Galle. In 1880 he moved to Kandy where, with his wife, he pioneered girls' education. In 1884, he travelled south to found the Uva Mission, described by Moscrop as part of, 'our new aggressive movements' in a context of 'blatant and defiant heathenism' (Moscrop 1894: 287). He also edited *The Ceylon Friend* (*CF*), belated successor to *The Friend* (*TF*).

His first quarterly letter to Mission Headquarters described the Panadura Debate:

> It proved in a striking manner the strong interest, nay more, the deep anxiety which exists among the masses of the people, Idolaters as well as Christians, about their religions. It is one of the signs of the times and is certainly a loud call for more extensively aggressive missionary labour.
>
> *(Extracts from Quarterly Letters Addressed to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by Ministers of the South Ceylon District* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo), (*QL*), No. LXXXII, September 1873, from Mission House Colpetty: 196–201, here p. 297)

Moscrop worked in Sri Lanka between 1883 and 1900, mainly in Colombo and Kandy. A telling cameo of him appeared in *The Buddhist* (*TB*), written by the editor, a former pupil of Moscrop's. Moscrop is teaching at Wesley College, Colombo, and claims that humane institutions had originated with Christianity. A pupil then mentions King Asoka of India to challenge this. Moscrop accepts his mistake and praises Buddhism. The editor continued, 'Often Mr Moscrop used to discuss questions relating to Buddhism with the boys of that faith; but on no occasion did he take advantage of his position to unduly influence their young minds either by specious arguments or by belittling and ridiculing their belief. He was worlds above such tactics.'[2] His writings on religion, however, were not so restrained. For example, when commenting on Arnold's attempt in his poem, *The Light of the World*, to bring the Buddha and Jesus closer together, he declared:

> Christ can step into no Pantheon except to empty it, and the time will come when the great world teachers will bow, with those whom they have taught, before Him to Whom has been given the Name which is above every Name . . . (ie Jesus Christ).
>
> (Moscrop 1891: 394)

Murdoch (1819–1904) worked in Sri Lanka and India for almost 60 years, becoming one of Asia's most prolific nineteenth-century advocates of Christian literature. He arrived in Sri Lanka in 1844 to be headmaster of one of the Normal Schools in the island and was posted to Kandy. From there, he wrote, 'I have found all the Sinhalese with whom I have come in contact very kind. I often visit the parents of my pupils, and some of them come frequently to my house and talk about our two religions' (Morris 1906: 30). One interesting point from this time was his opposition to allocating the first hour of school to Christian instruction on the grounds that it was a breach of faith to use taxes from people of other faiths for this (Morris 1906: 38).

In 1849, Murdoch left government service, partly because financial cutbacks had affected his school. He was already involved in promoting Christian literature

and his life now turned to this.[3] Eventually, hearing of needs in India, he co-founded the South Indian Christian School-Book Society, and began to commute between Kandy and Madras. In 1858, he became Travelling Secretary for the Christian Vernacular Education Society, newly formed by four missionary societies in India as a response to the 1857 Mutiny. In 1891, it became the Christian Literature Society for India. Murdoch worked with it until the end of the century, while still writing in Sinhala and English for Sri Lanka. He visited China twice and helped to establish the Christian Literature Society there.

John Ferguson speaking of Murdoch in 1897, claimed, 'never has there been a more consistent life in unbroken and ever-expanding good work' (J. Ferguson 1898: 13). However, Murdoch's construction of Buddhism was the most negative in this section. His motivation can be glimpsed in this prayer, written before he sailed from Britain and slipped between his diary pages:

> I am about to leave all religious ordinances, to be exposed to many temptations amidst heathen gloom. May I shine as a light to the world . . . May I show by my conduct what a lovely thing Christianity is . . . May I never spend my time in unprofitable pursuits or in listless indolence, but be diligent in business and wise in winning souls . . . He (God) brought about that I should be on the point of embarking in the glorious undertaking of bringing the world unto God. O what goodness! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and magnify His holy name.
>
> (Morris 1906: 16)

Marks arrived in Sri Lanka in June 1866 and was posted to Buono Vista in Galle, where a Miss Gibson had established a girls boarding school on land she had gifted to the Bishop of Colombo in 1858. By 1873, Bishop Jermyn of Colombo could write that Marks was the best missionary in the Diocese, adding, 'he is scarcely paid for his work'.[4] In 1890, he was transferred to Trincomalee in the East. In 1903, in his seventy-fifth year, Marks was still working strenuously in Trincomalee with a sick wife and no financial security, having taken only one home leave since his arrival. In that year, his brother, Rev. J.E. Marks, wrote to the Bishop of Colombo asking for a special grant to be made to them. In 1904 both were ill and had to be supported by local SPG funds, since the mother society did not grant pensions. Marks died before his wife.[5]

Buddhism as nihilism

The following quotes from Lapham and Moscrop are paradigmatic of the late nineteenth-century missionary perspective. Superficially, they show little advance on Harvard in the 1820s:

> Buddhism is one vast system of negations – of *hope destroying* negations: 'There is no God'; 'There is none higher than man, therefore

> prayer is a folly'; 'There is no redemption except by a man's own exertions'; 'There is, and there can be, no forgiveness'.
>
> (Lapham 1893: 193)

> Buddhism – a religion without God and without hope in the world – is too pessimistic, too cold, too antagonistic to the constitution of human nature to take the world captive. Buddhism cannot succeed for it says, 'There is no good, but all is evil in human existence'.
>
> (Moscrop 1889: 95)

The difference is that the work of Spence Hardy and Gogerly now fuels the discourse, particularly their representation of the Four Noble Truths and *anattā*. Buddhism is therefore seen as preaching, through the Truths, that suffering is an inherent part of existence and that its cause is desire, especially the desire for existence.[6] With few exceptions, missionaries at this time, although aware of other interpretations,[7] continue to condemn *nibbāna* as annihilation of being, extinction or unconsciousness. Hugh Horsley, CMS missionary, for instance, pointedly distinguishes between Buddhism and Hinduism, perhaps in response to Arnold or the less accurate accounts of memoir writers: 'As the readers of the GLEANER are probably aware, the Buddhist, according to his religion, looks forward to a state called Nirvana, or annihilation, while the Hindu considers that the height of happiness consists in absorption into the deity' (Horsley 1885: 81). Others, possibly drawing on Childers' two-dimension theory,[8] are inconsistent. Moscrop can present *nibbāna* as 'the state and place of passionless bliss and eternal calm' (Moscrop 1894: 285) and yet claim that the Buddha, 'has been completely and finally dissolved' (Moscrop 1899: 15). Langdon can link it with 'perfect knowledge' but can still claim that, at death, nothingness or unconsciousness meets those who gain such knowledge (S. Langdon 1886: 42). Philip Marks refers to it as 'that state of coma, if not annihilation' (Marks 1882: 45).

When meditation is glimpsed as part of the Noble Truths, it is ridiculed. Langdon is typical. When talking about the 'Buddhist tree Worshippers' of Sri Lanka, he adds:

> By their fruits ye shall know them; and what are the fruits in Ceylon? We point, in answer, to the national indolence, which is perhaps due in no small measure to ages of teaching that contemplation is the highest of all virtues, and meditating upon nothing the holiest of all duties; the laziness expressed in the imitation of the recumbent statues of Buddha.
>
> (S. Langdon 1886: 52)

On *anattā* there is little movement from Gogerly. As in the middle years, however, some find soul terminology difficult to avoid. So Balding accepts Gogerly's theory but implies that ordinary Buddhists disregard it (Balding 1922: 18), and Langdon can vividly describe David de Silva at the Panadura Debate, 'attacking

the Buddhistic teaching in regard to the soul or rather the denial of its existence'[9] but slips back into 'soul' language in his books (Langdon 1886: 33). Murdoch is the one who stays rigidly with Gogerly's negativity, privileging textual evidence over popular perception, distinguishing between the everyday Buddhist belief in a soul and the 'true doctrine' that there is no soul (Murdoch 1887a: 31).

I shall illustrate the nihilistic interpretation at this stage in the century through John Murdoch's booklet, *Buddha and his Religion*. It is addressed to educated Buddhists and presented as a scholarly account of Buddhism drawn from authenticated sources.

It opens with a minimalist, neutral, de-mythologized account of the Buddha's life, followed by facts about the spread of Buddhism. After this, the attack on Buddhism begins. First, Murdoch apes Spence Hardy's method in 1866 to question the omniscience of the Buddha and, by extension, the trustworthiness of his teachings. For instance, he describes the Buddha's medical prescriptions as, 'filthy, disgusting and useless', adding, 'Any physician who ordered them would be supposed to have lost his reason' (Murdoch 1887a: 19). And allegory is reduced to absurdity:

> If Buddha spoke with such a voice or if the Sakwalas trembled (at the Buddha's birth), the voice would have been heard and the shaking felt in Europe; but nothing of the kind is recorded by European historians. Such wonders are only told in Buddhist books.
>
> (Murdoch 1887a: 21)

After this he itemizes 'some of the principal teachings of the Buddha':

- 'The Denial of a Creator' – adding that the Buddha made himself an object of worship;
- 'The Denial of an Intelligent Governor of the World';
- 'No hearer of Prayer' – adding that, in Buddhism, man is his own god and there is no pardon for sin;
- 'Man has no Soul';
- there is 'No permanent Happiness' – stressing the first Noble Truth: 'Life is suffering'.

(Murdoch 1887a: 22–34)

Murdoch continues, 'As a devout Buddhist counts his beads, he mutters *Anitya, Dukha, Anatta*, "Transience, Sorrow, Unreality." Existence is a curse, and the great aim should be annihilation or nothingness' (Murdoch 1887a: 32).

After this, some sympathy is allowed for Buddhist moral precepts (Murdoch 1887a: 34–7). Lastly, he attempts to prove that the three-fold refuge, Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*, is no refuge at all, repeating arguments from the middle years of the century concerning the Buddha's faulty knowledge of cosmology, and accusing the monastic Sangha of being weak, uneducated, idle and proud. The final part asserts Christianity's superiority, putting forward three 'True'

Refuges; 'the Eternal God', 'the Ever-living Almighty Saviour' and 'the Holy Spirit' (Murdoch 1887a: 45–9).

Even some of Murdoch's missionary compatriots believed he had gone too far, but the fault was his style, not the content. The non-evangelical *CDG* for instance, admitted that the booklet was a useful summary, but advised 'that much expression be either modified or wholly expunged in future editions'.[10]

Lapham might also have protested. Buddhism, 'has a glorious history and has left a beneficent mark on the peoples of the East', he declares, having earlier said that the Buddha's teachings were 'more purely held and more intelligently interpreted' in Sri Lanka than in any other place (Lapham 1893: 192). In the same breath, he stresses that other religions should not be disparaged as though everything within them was evil, sweepingly claiming that 99 out of every 100 missionaries would agree with him. But in the next breath he can still declare that Buddhism is 'hope-destroying', as quoted earlier, and that it 'is miserably deficient in power to uplift its followers' lives to even an approximation of its own best teaching' (Lapham 1893: 193).

The Buddha

Responding to Arnold, missionaries tended to opt for one of two approaches when it came to the Buddha. The first was to stress what the Buddha lacked and the second, to concede beauty to the Buddha as a man, while condemning his teachings. Moscrop chose the first and Langdon, the second. Moscrop, for instance, giving a brief biography to children, willingly admits that the Buddha when young would have been sensitive to sorrow. Yet, his preferred mode was to subordinate everything to what the Buddha could not, in his eyes, fulfil – the role of saviour. So, to a missionary meeting in Birmingham in 1894, he reduces the Buddha image to: 'the face impassive with dreamless sleep, the ear heavy that it cannot hear, the arm shortened into the lap, indicative of meditation, shortened that it cannot save' (Moscrop 1894: 285).[11] He also drew on Spence Hardy's by now hackneyed arguments to prove that the Buddha and his teaching could not be trusted (Moscrop 1899).[12]

In contrast, Langdon, in *My Mission Garden*, a book written for children, draws heavily on *The Light of Asia* to retell the life of the Buddha, sometimes quoting directly. He calls the Buddha a 'wonderful man' (S. Langdon 1886: 35), 'one of the most remarkable men that ever lived' (S. Langdon 1886: 48). But his aim is not hagiographic; it is to place the Buddha firmly in the realm of the mundane as Spence Hardy had done in his later works. Typical is his reduction of the Buddha's birth narrative:

> I need not tell you that all this is legend, and had no foundation whatever in truth. What really occurred was the birth of a little baby, not so very different from what some of you fine boys were when you were babies, and probably as handsome a baby as any of you.
>
> (S. Langdon 1886: 26)

Stories of the Buddha's intellectual feats as a child and the intervention of gods when he encounters four sights are similarly dismissed. A sensitive, protected young man would naturally be shocked at the latter, Langdon explains, to the point that he felt, 'he ought to sacrifice his wealth and power in order to help in relieving suffering men and women' (S. Langdon 1886: 32).

Sincerity, sensitivity to suffering and persuasive oratory can all be accepted in the Buddha, as can comparison with Christian contemplative hermits. In their love of meditation, Langdon claims, all would have dreamt 'very much the same sort of dreams, and saw visions of the same kind' (S. Langdon 1886: 36). Total admiration, however, is barred. 'You cannot judge of it rightly by the "fairy tales" which Mr Arnold has made so beautiful by his poetry in *The Light of Asia*', he warns (S. Langdon 1886: 48–9).[13]

Contemporary religion in Sri Lanka: ammunition to attack Western sympathizers

> Look at the decay of the temple and disregard of the sacred places, as evidence of the decay of the faith. Look at the horrible devil ceremonies and cruel superstitions to which the people have been driven by the atheism of Buddha; and you will form a more correct idea of what Buddhism really means than by reading the old Buddhist fairy tales transformed into beautiful English poetry.
>
> (S. Langdon 1886: 53)

Urban life and Christian life are praised by the missionaries, but village life continues to be condemned for its decadence, vice and demon ceremonies. And this is thrown at supporters of Arnold. In the early decades of the century, missionaries usually distinguished between 'demon' worship and Buddhism. In this part of the century, they do not, in a line that goes back to Percival. And their reasons are both empirical and strategic. Empirically, their observation of Buddhism – finding, for instance, that some Buddhist monks endorse demon ceremonies and are involved in the casting of horoscopes (S. Langdon 1890: 71; Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 279) – suggested to them a more intimate connection between the two than their predecessors detected. Marks puts it this way, 'Budhism cannot stand alone. Its boasted toleration is a necessity of its existence' (Marks 1882: 64). Moscrop is more graphic: the soul of the Southern Province 'is thick with the matted roots and age-long growths of a tangled Buddhism and demonism' (Moscrop and Restarick 1906: 63). A few go as far as to say that both Buddhism and demon worship are Satanic. A Miss Gollock, a CMS representative, for instance, claims that the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy is 'Satan's seat' (Gollock 1895: 21) and that five minutes there plants, 'an undying hatred' of Buddhist worship in a Christian (Gollock 1895: 21).[14]

Strategically, this argument was used to make three direct challenges. The first, as previously mentioned, was to the growing Western view that Buddhism was

pure, rational and scientific. The second was to romanticized notions of a 'picturesque' Orient. The third was to the educated Sinhala person attracted to the idea that Buddhism was rational. So, Moscrop, in his 1894 Birmingham speech, recognizing that visitors to Sri Lanka often warm to the loveliness of Buddhism, declares:

> but they do not know what we know, that nine tenths of the Buddhist temples in Colombo have their demon shrines, covered by the same roof and allowed of the priests, even that of the Buddhist High Priest himself – shrines with dark recesses containing demon-images which call forth the deepest awe and worship of the people.
>
> (Moscrop 1894: 286)

To Europeans attracted to Buddhism, the missionary, therefore, said, 'You do not know the reality of Buddhism. We, who see it daily, do and it is not what you think it is.' When addressing the rising Sinhala middle class, they appealed to rationality and science to ridicule demon ceremonies and, by extension, Buddhism. So Murdoch declares to a Sri Lankan readership, 'Demon worship is the religion of savages' (Murdoch 1887b: 26).[15]

Within this picture, there could be no romanticism, as illustrated by Langdon. When describing a family in Uva, in the extreme south of Sri Lanka, he at first pictures them from a distance, as part of a rural idyll. But as his lens draws closer, the idyll breaks:

> One or two of the children, who formed such a pleasant feature in the idyl, were suffering from loathsome skin diseases. Some of the elders exhibited on the unclothed part of their bodies a combination of filth and disease, which to an inexperienced visitor was frightful to contemplate. The ignorance was lamentable.
>
> (S. Langdon 1890: 68)

Of the life awaiting the girl children, he writes:

> Regarded by the gentle Buddha himself as a mere animal, and inferior at that, what can she look forward to, what hope is there for such as she in the villages where the marriage tie is of the loosest possible description, where English law has found it impossible to suppress the old abominable customs of polygamy and polyandry? . . . O, my friends, we talk of the horror of the zenana, but the life of the zenana must often be a state of almost crystalline purity compared with the life which lies before this poor village girl.
>
> (Langdon 1890: 74)

Even in secular publications such as Ferguson's Directories similar views can be glimpsed. That John Ferguson, and indeed A.M. Ferguson, his uncle, were keen

evangelical Baptists who found little to praise in Buddhism is not immediately obvious. Yet, the willingness to commit murder to save family honour and to torture animals to avoid a direct kill are mentioned as accepted practices within Buddhist society (Ferguson and Ferguson 1893: 178–80).

Concluding remarks

The words about Moscrop quoted from *TB* at the beginning of this section suggest that in day-to-day relationships with Buddhists, many missionaries in these decades were not openly aggressive or condemnatory. The non-idyllic family in Uva, for instance, is one that the Langdons befriend. There is evidence that evangelism was attempted with more sensitivity than in the early years of the century. Gone are confrontational tactics at Buddhist ceremonies and outside Buddhist temples. However, few missionaries would compromise their position that 'demon worship' was unscientific and uncivilised, that Buddhism was lacking in hope, or that Christianity met religious needs that Buddhism could not. And they now realised they had opposition in the West as well as Sri Lanka.

Dissenting missionary voices are few, although examples from other Asian countries can be found.[16] If sympathy towards Buddhism is allowed to escape, it is withdrawn at another point. A blatant example of such recanting is seen in John Fletcher Hurst, who came to Sri Lanka from America with an expressed interest in missionary work. As Langdon, Hurst had been influenced by Arnold. As Langdon, he compares the Buddha with Christian saints, this time with St Francis and St Ignatius of Loyola (Hurst 1891: 413). There is sympathy in his portrayal of the Buddha's sense of vocation, his fight against evil, his mendicant life and his teaching (Hurst 1891: 415). But he could also write that there is 'inherent wickedness' in Buddhism (Hurst 1891: 250), and his visit to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy draws out this:

> The Temple of the Sacred Tooth of Buddha shows how far idolatry can go when it once sets out on its absurdities. Nature has nothing to do with suppressing superstition or destroying faith in grim images in wood and stone. The fairest sky and most beautiful scenery beneath it say nothing against even so gross a corruption as a great temple to even the spurious tooth of a spurious god.
>
> (Hurst 1891: 268)

11

ROMANTIC OTHER, NEGATIVE SPIN

Constance Gordon Cumming

Constance or ‘Eka’ Gordon Cumming (1837–1924) belonged to an aristocratic, wealthy Scottish family. She was a prodigious traveller and writer (Robinson 1990: 93–5), the twelfth child in a family of 14, who spread themselves across the globe. One of her brothers lived in India, another in Sri Lanka. The latter died in Batticaloa just two years before she first touched the island on her maiden overseas trip to India via Egypt in 1868. At that point, Sri Lanka hit her as an earthly paradise, an image not lost in her later writing. In the 1870s, she returned for two years at the invitation of the Bishop of Colombo, Hugh W. Jermyn (Bishop between 1871 and 1875), who had been her parish priest in Scotland. They were two years of privileged treatment and extensive travel, with the Bishop and his daughter, and occasionally the Governor.

Gordon Cumming is worth including for more reasons than her gender. A microcosm of nineteenth-century trends and personae struggled within her: committed adherent of the Christian Church and supporter of CMS (Gordon Cumming 1887a,b 1890); romantic artist who could not spend a day without sketching;[1] educated humanitarian thinker with an interest in comparative mythology; independent aristocrat, eager to amass facts[2] and willing to challenge gendered role expectations;[3] and critical supporter of the British Empire. When she wrote about Buddhism, the struggle was between her intuitive, aesthetic, romantic attraction to the religion and her exclusivist Christian conditioning.

Although Gordon Cumming did not quote extensively from other visitors to Sri Lanka in her writings, internal evidence suggests she had read Baker, Forbes, Knox and Tennant, and knew of the work of Spence Hardy and Gogerly.[4] Her attitude to the ancient culture of Sri Lanka shared much with Forbes and Knighton. Her romanticism can be compared with Baker’s. Some of her views about British support for Buddhism paralleled Boake’s. And it is not unlikely that Jermyn’s views influenced her, not least his conviction that Buddhism was losing its hold over the people.[5] In addition, she can be compared with other aristocratic women writers who visited Sri Lanka at this time, but for much shorter periods, such as Augusta Klein and Helen Ford.[6]

Two Happy Years in Ceylon, which records her visit, was not published until 1892 and included later reflections on such things as European interest in

Buddhism, Colonel Olcott and Sri Lanka's Buddhist Revival, and the 1883 Kotahena Riot between Buddhists and Roman Catholics.[7]

Visit to Kelaniya: a paradigm

Gordon Cumming first mentions Buddhism in *Two Happy Years in Ceylon* when describing a visit to Kelaniya Temple, a place of pilgrimage just outside Colombo. Her account is interesting not only because of the tension it reveals between her conflicting loyalties as artist and 'missionary', but also because of the authority she attributes to Colonel Olcott, who visited Sri Lanka after she had left. First of all, she describes herself as noticing that the Hindu gods, Ganesh, Vishnu and Siva, are the Buddha's companions at the temple, and uses this to stress to the 'student of theoretic Buddhism, which inculcates no worship of any sort' that this is quite natural in Ceylon and 'Siam' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 81).

She judges this a debased form of Buddhism, stemming from the influence of priests from 'Siam' who, 'incorporated all manner of Hindoo superstitions and caste prejudices' into Buddhism. But she praises the '*Amarapoora*' sect [Amarapura Nikāya or monastic fraternity] for disclaiming connection with the polytheism of India, showing her knowledge of monastic institutions in Sri Lanka (Gordon Cummings 1892, I: 81–3). Olcott's Catechism is then quoted in support of the view that 'priest' is not the right word to use of the Buddhist monk: 'Buddhist priests do not acknowledge or expect anything from a Divine Power, but they *ought* to govern their lives according to the doctrine of the Buddha' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 83–4).

The description of the temple that follows is positive, betraying that she was emotionally affected by the devotion there: the flower offerings; the Bodhi Tree; the stands of oil lamps. She speaks of 'the kindly yellow-robed priests', 'a number of gentle Singhalese', 'pretty, small children' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 86). She condemns the Dutch who, she claims, forbade worship, and praises the 'perfect liberty of conscience' brought by the British.

The only jarring word up to this point is reference to, 'various hideous idols' beneath the shadow of the Bodhi Tree. However, it is as though she catches herself at this moment and realizes that, as a supporter of a missionary society, she cannot allow too much empathy. She, therefore, switches back to the previously praised relationship between the British and Buddhism, and finds it wanting. Through the British, she claims, a dying religion had been electrified into, 'a state of renewed and aggressive vigour' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 87). The Kandyan Convention was, 'an iniquitous compact with idolatry'. The authorities were not aware, she adds, 'how small the influence of the priests really was, apart from Government support', or that through it they were guilty of supporting slavery (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 90).

After further condemnation of the Kandyan Convention, she moves to recent institutional reforms within Buddhism, offering selective praise, to the recently

founded Vidyodaya College, for instance, because it will train monks ‘to replace their utterly illiterate and degraded brethren’ (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 93). But, she also speaks of the confusion Sinhala Christians experience on seeing Buddhist monks at government ceremonials, inadvertently pointing to the success of the missionary’s ‘no compromise’ thrust. Events such as the Kotahena Riots are then described to show the growing conflict between Buddhists and Christians within the Buddhist Revival. And when describing the funeral of the venerable Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda, she cannot help a jibe at the European Buddhist:

> Of course, a scene so solemn could not but have an incongruous element, which was furnished by an English Buddhist, who could not resist such an opportunity for attracting attention, and so took his place on the Pyre ‘as the representative of America, Europe and England’ to deliver a funeral oration (through an interpreter), assuring all priests that very soon all America and Europe would receive the faith of the Buddha.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 101)

This account reveals that Gordon Cumming’s initial response to the temple was that of the sensitive observer and artist. But, by 1892, this was overlaid with an essay on the Buddhist Revival informed by missionary perspectives and the awareness that Buddhism was attracting many Western free-thinkers. Sympathy towards Buddhist devotion, therefore, is drowned by her eagerness to argue the failings of Buddhism in practice.

Gordon Cumming the romantic

The many physical faces of the Sri Lankan ‘other’ fascinated Gordon Cumming, the artist. Her writing sometimes erupts with frustration because of the inadequacy of words to express beauty, variety and poignancy. ‘I only wish it were possible,’ she exclaims, ‘for words to convey something of the charm of such surroundings, of majestic crags, clear streams’ (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 277). Her sketching seems to express an almost obsessive wish to capture what is strange, fascinating and different from herself. People, scenery and buildings are perceived in terms of colour, shape and contrast. And religion is swept up into this. Temples take on the beauty of the surrounding countryside. Worshippers are clothed in gentleness, calm and tropical abundance. Members of the monastic Sangha are seen as a study in colour, their ‘gracefully worn drapery’ harmonizing with surroundings of rock or green (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 340). Animate and inanimate become part of the ‘dream’ of beauty Gordon Cumming wishes to capture.[8]

Religion is seen through this romantic lens when, like others before her, with the *Mahāvaṃsa* in her imagination, she visited the ancient Buddhist cities of Anuradhapura, Mihintale and Polonnaruwa. At Anuradhapura, for instance, she

finds it strange to think that when Britons lived in wattle huts, 'these islanders had vast cities, with stately palaces and other great buildings' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 397), cities which had 'houses for preaching' at every corner, where 'passers-by might learn the wisdom of Buddha, whose temples, then as now, were daily strewn with the choicest flowers' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 398–9).

As for the present, although at some points she appropriates the orientalist view of Forbes and Knighton that Buddhism in the present is degraded or dying (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 288, II: 117), she is also fascinated by Buddhism's ability to survive, unchanged, across centuries, marvelling, for instance, that the praises of the Buddha had been 'ceaselessly sung by the yellow-robed brethren' at Mulgirigala for 20 centuries (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 210). Her account of climbing Sri Pada reveals a particularly high level of empathy. She spends the night on the summit, and, towards dawn, sees a devout group of pilgrims struggling upwards through the mists, holding lights and singing. At first she describes their chanting as, 'wild and pathetic' floating upwards in the gloom of the night. But, as they achieve the summit, her style changes:

> At last the topmost stair was reached, and as each pilgrim set foot on the level just below the shrine, he extinguished his torch of blazing palm-leaves, and with bowed head and outstretched arms stood wrapped in fervent adoration. Some knelt so lowlily that their foreheads rested on the rock. Then facing the east – now streaked with bars of orange betwixt purple clouds – they waited with earnest faces, eagerly longing for the appearing of the sun, suggesting to my mind a strikingly Oriental illustration of the words of the poet-King, 'My soul waiteth for the Lord *more than they that watch for the morning*'.
>
> Gradually the orange glow broadened, and the welling light grew clearer and clearer, until, with a sudden bound, up rose the glorious sun, and, as if with one voice, each watcher greeted its appearing, with the deep-toned 'Saadu! Saadu!' which embodies such indescribable intensity of devotion.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 338)

The distance so often present in Gordon Cumming's writing breaks down here. Empathy triumphs, although it lasts only as long as the dawn. Yet, the concluding paragraph of the chapter prefigures what would become known in the twentieth century as inclusivism in her hope that, 'the great All-Father' hears and responds to the prayers and devotions of those who do not acknowledge him (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 344).

Repetition of the missionary perspective

Gordon Cumming's treatment of Buddhist belief appears mainly at the end of *Two Happy Years* in two chapters, 'The Tug of War – The Battle of Diverse Creeds

in Ceylon' and 'Christian Work in Ceylon'. It is in these chapters, possibly written well after her return from Sri Lanka, that missionary influence is most evident.[9] She speaks less as the romantic but informed memoir writer and more as a CMS representative, her vocabulary becoming almost indistinguishable from the missionaries of the last section, as shown in this, the nearest she comes to a statement about doctrine: 'The Buddhist Gospel of Misery teaches that all is vanity and all is suffering, and that complete cessation of craving for existence is the only cessation of suffering, and therefore the one thing to strive after' (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 418).

Most repellent to her is the idea of liberation through self effort, 'own power', rather than through the 'other power' of God:

> a theory of perfection only to be attained through self-conquest, at which poor weak human beings are advised to aim through ages of lonely life-long struggles extending over many transmigrations, without one prayerful look to the Divine Helper who alone can keep our wayward wills from wandering after all manner of evil.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 419)

This apparent individualism and the missionary construction of the Four Noble Truths colour her response to Buddhist ethics. She refers, for instance, to the one priest and pupil who live at Aukana, a site in the north of the country that boasts a 13 metre high, undamaged fifth-century statue of the Buddha, as, 'striving after the attainment of that state of perfection which consists in the total extinction of all care for and interest in anything except one's own progress' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 374–5).[10]

In a familiar pattern, sympathy and respect can be maintained for the Buddha, as kindler of a pale light in 'the black night of unmitigated idolatry' (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 420), but her highest accolade is to imagine him living 600 years later and becoming 'the most earnest and devoted' of Jesus' disciples (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 420).

As for *nibbāna*, when Gordon Cumming the romantic speaks, *nibbāna* becomes 'sleep' or 'dreamless repose' (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 393). But, in the last chapters, it is constructed nihilistically (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 416–20). Yet, although she criticizes Arnold for depicting things, 'not as they really are, but as he would have them to be' (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 418), she nevertheless uses one of Arnold's images: 'The highest ideal of bliss is the attainment of perfection in the colourless, loveless condition of a dewdrop falling into the ocean, thenceforth to exist only as merged in the Infinite' (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 420).

The Western theoretic Buddhist accused

Gordon Cumming's strategy when faced with Western interest in Buddhism was the same as Copleston, Langdon, Moscrop and many others: to distinguish

between the reified, textual Buddhism of the West and Buddhism in practice. Again, however, there is tension between her missionary sympathies and her intellectual curiosity. A touch of the twentieth century anthropologist can be seen in this comment on the use of the cobra within Buddhism:

> So Buddhism incorporates and sanctions every conceivable variety of worship, provided that of Buddha himself is paramount. Thus the serpent worship, which could not be eradicated, was made subservient to Buddhism, by the legend of how the gigantic king of all the cobras proved his reverence for Gautama, by rearing its great hood above his head, to protect him from the sun as he sat lost in meditation.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 412)

She went further than some missionaries, though, in her critique of the orientalist project. Where some missionaries only implied, she was adamant. Theosophists and free-thinking Europeans had constructed a Buddhism in line with their own anti-Christian stance, a false, theoretical entity with no foundation in reality. Significant also is the role she gives to European scholarship within the Buddhist Revival. Indigenous Asian scholarship is minimized. When talking of Vidyodaya College, for example, she implies that its main purpose, 'to encourage in the laity a love for the oriental literature', has only become possible because 'European students' have 'excavated' it 'from beneath accumulated mountains of rubbish' (Gordon Cummings 1892, I: 92). Similarly, she attributes to Turnour the discovery of Sri Lanka's historical past, writing of the *Mahāvaṃsa*:

> Being written in Pali verse, none but the most learned priests could possibly read it, and, as a matter of fact, no one seems to have been able to do so, until in 1826 Mr Turnour, of the Ceylon Civil Service, set himself to master this terribly difficult task, and, with marvellous patience and ingenuity, succeeded in so doing.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 400–1)

Her implication is that Europe is the agent for all scholarly knowledge of Buddhism in the nineteenth century. The main distinction Gordon Cumming makes, therefore, is between an indigenous Buddhism that is an amalgamation of diverse creeds and a scholarly, theoretical Buddhism that is defined by and dependent on the West.

Concluding remarks

Gordon Cumming berated Europeans for not seeing a difference between theoretical Buddhism and Buddhism in practice, and strongly opposed the representation of Buddhism emerging in Victorian Britain. Yet, there was also a major dichotomy in her own perception of Buddhism. As artist and romantic, she felt

strongly drawn to the aesthetic beauty of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. In her travels and during her sketching, she conversed with members of the Sangha and other Buddhists with evident interest (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 86, 246–7; II: 24). In these moods, she was willing to compare religions and criticize her own; she was perceiver and empathizer rather than judge. However, as supporter of a missionary society, and influenced by the missionary construction of Buddhist doctrine, she became the judge, both of Buddhist doctrine and of Western orientalism.

12

BUDDHISM AS LIFE-AFFIRMING

Contesting the missionaries

The missionaries and their allies saw popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka as a degenerate amalgamation of creeds, which neither encouraged accurate doctrinal knowledge nor a commendable morality. Philosophical Buddhism fared little better, condemned as a life-denying nihilism. In the middle years of the century, Forbes and Knighton contested these views. In the later decades, the contesters were Robert Childers, John F. Dickson and T.W. Rhys Davids of Chapter 13.

Neither Childers nor Dickson rejected Christianity. Christian terminology creeps into their interpretations.[1] Both drew on the work of Gogerly and Spence Hardy. Yet, there is no proselytizing imperative in their writing, nor a wish to undermine Buddhism. They were among the few who realized that the Empire brought opportunities to learn as well as to dominate.

Robert Caesar Childers (1838–1876) straddles the middle and late periods. Born the son of an Anglican clergyman, he became a writer in the Ceylon Civil Service in 1860, serving both as Private Secretary to the Governor and as Assistant Government Agent in Kandy. In 1864, ill-health forced him back to England. Until his premature death, he committed himself to the study of the Pāli language and Buddhism, an interest most probably awakened through his friendship with two outstanding Buddhist monks, the venerable Yātrāmullē Dhammārāma, who taught him Sinhala and possibly Pāli (Guruge 1984: 21), and the venerable Vaskaḍuvē Subhūti, whom he met in the early 1860s when he was living in the southern town of Bentota (Guruge 1984: lxxxiii). In 1872, he was appointed Professor of Pāli and Buddhist Literature at University College, London. He is remembered mainly for his two-volumed *Dictionary of the Pali Language* published in 1872 and 1875.

Childers is the one writer of this part who could not have been influenced by *The Light of Asia*. Indeed Arnold could have been influenced by him. Yet, the personality of the Buddha was very real for him. In the Preface to his Dictionary, when defending the Theravāda texts as a true reflection of the Buddha's teaching, he wrote in a note, 'but to those who are familiar with the Pali sacred books nothing is more striking than the intense personality of Gautama, as the way in which he impresses his individuality on every detail of the system' (Childers 1909: ix). In this one sentence, Childers betrays that his study of Buddhism was

not only an academic exercise, but also a response to the teacher who emerged from the texts.

Sir John Frederick Dickson came to Sri Lanka as a writer in 1859, immediately after graduating from Oxford. He remained until 1885, quickly rising through the Ceylon Civil Service to positions of responsibility. He learnt Pāli and became President of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (RASCB).

Dickson's opposition to the missionaries is seen in the quote from his writings at the very beginning of this book. Not surprisingly, the missionaries contested it. Replying to his statement that Buddhists 'will not be converted', Rev. J.W. Fall of the CMS wrote:

> On the contrary, at the present moment, there is in this house a devoted and proved Christian, who a year ago was a Buddhist priest; another priest I have seen only to-day; and a third devoted Buddhist and missionary of a form of Buddhism is today in Kandy listening intently to the words of Mr Grubb and his companions in their Mission just started.
>
> (*CMS Report*: 1889–1890: 177)

To this, Dickson might have replied, 'And what is the point of these conversions?' For he was also able to write, 'It would take long to describe even a tenth part of the resemblances between Buddhism and Christianity' (Dickson 1889: 25).

Childers and Dickson, although united in their sympathy towards Buddhism and their commitment to Pāli scholarship, diverged in how they used the textual heritage of Buddhism. Childers, as lexicographer, chose to wrestle with the total spectrum of doctrinal terms, an academic task that inevitably gave primacy to the texts. But he diverged from most Western-based orientalists in that he did not dare interpret the texts without recourse to the living tradition, his Sri Lankan mentors. I will not say 'informants'. Dickson, in contrast, concentrated on Buddhism in practice, in the lives of the monastic Sangha and lay people. And it was this practice that led him to the texts for secondary information about what his eyes had witnessed. But the divergence is superficial. Whether the texts were primary or secondary, both Childers and Dickson refused to drive a wedge between precept and practice, as so many of their contemporaries were doing. They were also agreed on something else. The data I have suggests that neither spent much time on the biography of the Buddha, though a reference by Dickson to the Buddha as 'the ascetic reformer' is worth noting, showing how normative the image of the Buddha as reformer had by then become (Dickson 1889: 1).

The challenge to the missionaries: morality and vibrant living

The refusal to drive a wedge between precept and practice is shown most poignantly in their attitude to the contemporary Buddhism of their day. In a note

to his definition of *nibbāna*, Childers wrote that Buddhism retained in Ceylon, 'almost its pristine purity' (Childers 1909: 272). Cordiner had written the same in 1807 (Cordiner 1807, I: 145). In the years between the two, however, few writers, Forbes and Knighton included, had dared voice this. For Childers and Dickson, however, this 'pristine purity' was expressed in the contemporary.

For instance, in the mid-1870s, Childers published a translation of the *Sigālovāda Sutta*. His preface summarized four contemporary judgements on Buddhism: that it was 'a system of barren metaphysics'; that it was 'sheer mysticism'; that it was 'a code of pure and beautiful morality' and that it was 'a selfish abstraction from the world, a systematic repression of every impulse and emotion of the heart' (Childers 1890: 134). It was the last that he sought to contest. So, he asks of the *sutta*, 'Does it tell us of a "frozen world?" of ice-locked affections, of the healthy impulses of the heart paralyzed and withered? – nay rather, is it not full of the enthusiasm of humanity?' (Childers 1890: 135).[2] There is no hint here that text and contemporary practice were at odds with one another. Rather, the text is offered to raise awareness of Buddhism in practice.

Childers' attitude towards the living heritage of Buddhism is confirmed most eloquently in his letters about Buddhist doctrine to the Vaskaḍuvē Subhūti after his return to England, documented by Guruge.[3] They show Childers continually asking Subhūti to clarify Pāli words and doctrinal concepts, including those relevant to his study of *nibbāna* (Guruge 1984: 8). The first eight pages of his Dictionary are sent, in draft, to Subhūti with the words, 'I have not sent this to anyone else' (Guruge 1984: 11). Throughout his letters, there is an implicit willingness to learn from and be corrected by his Sri Lankan mentor. And he is hurt when his work is criticized by the revivalist monk, Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṃgala (Guruge 1984: 35). But rather than assert the superiority of his Western scholarship, he insists that he wants his errors to be corrected for the second edition.

Childers, throughout his dictionary writing, was, therefore, united in friendship and scholarly collaboration with a Sri Lankan monk who was linguistically skilled, sensitive to the mood of the West and ready to answer an inexhaustible stream of questions. His wish to test his ideas against orthodoxy, rather than create new theories, and his deep respect for Subhūti shows not only that he was confident that the living tradition still existed in Sri Lanka, but also that he felt the wisdom of Sri Lankans was vital for his task. To negate the significance of this by arguing that Subhūti was part of an elite group of 'informants' distant from the majority of monks is simply not good enough.

The conviction that Britain would benefit from an awareness of Buddhism also shines through his letters. He laments to Subhūti in 1870 that a Christian clergyman had written a book disparaging Buddhism (Guruge 1984: 7) and later urges Subhūti to send material for publication so that, 'the people of England will get to know news about Buddhism' (Guruge 1984: 30). A letter written a few months before his death spoke of the translations he wished to undertake and continued, 'Thus all English people will be able to learn Buddhism. It will be for the good and the happiness of many' (Guruge 1984: 36).

Dickson and the living tradition

Dickson, introducing a translation of the *Pātimokkha*, the monastic disciplinary code, quotes Childers' words concerning the 'pristine purity' of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Proof that he was not thinking about the textual tradition alone lies in the inspiration for the translation: a *Pātimokkha* ceremony he witnessed at the Malvatta Monastery (Headquarters of the Malvatta chapter of the Siyam Nikāya) in Kandy in 1872. It was this practice that led him to seek out the text.

In another article, he moved beyond the monastic tradition to lay village religiosity. No mention is made of the amalgamation of creeds or the entrance of debasing elements. Buddhism, he claims:

> lives enshrined in the hearts of a pious, simple and kindly people; it leads them through a life of charity to a peaceful deathbed such as most Christians may envy. Having conquered desire, they enjoy a repose which cannot be disturbed.
>
> (Dickson 1889: 24)

As the missionaries, he translates *taṇhā* as 'desire', but the conquering of it is linked with peace. His attack on the missionaries was predicated both on Buddhism's continuing power over the lives of the people and the efficacy of its moral teaching.

The challenge to the missionaries: Buddhist philosophy

The greatest divergence between Dickson and Childers was in the area of Buddhist philosophy. Although Childers challenged some missionary allegations about Buddhism, his interpretation touched theirs at key points. Indeed Spence Hardy and Gogerly were two of his sources.[4] To illustrate this, I will use his representations of the Four Noble Truths, *nibbāna, anattā* and meditation.

Childers itemizes the Four Noble Truths in this way:

> 1 existence is suffering;
> 2 human passion (*taṇhā* – desire) is the cause of continued existence;
> 3 that by the destruction of human passion existence may be brought to an end;
> 4 that by a life of holiness the destruction of human passion may be attained.
>
> (Childers 1909: 56)

In his entry on *nibbāna*, this is filled out. 'The whole sum of sentient existence is Suffering,' he declares, 'and release from suffering or from the prospect of suffering can only be obtained by release from existence'. Calling the cause of continued existence, 'sin', he explains that it 'is removed by the Four Paths of

Sanctification' the entry to which is 'the "Sublime Eight-branched Road" which is a life in accordance with Buddha's commands'. He adds:

> By the practice of charity and other good works, by purity in word, thought and deed, and by the exercise of religious meditation, the disciple of Buddha is enabled to enter the Four Paths, and by so doing to escape from the misery of existence... Arahatship is final and perfect sanctification, it is a state in which merit and demerit, original sin, desire and attachment are rooted out, in which all that binds man to existence, all that leads to re-birth or transmigration, is wholly extinct.
>
> (Childers 1909: 266)

When the two entries are taken together, *taṇhā* is explained either as 'sin' or 'human passion', and translated as desire. Suffering is seen as inherent within existence, 'man's greatest enemy' according to the *nibbāna* entry. The end of existence is seen as the goal of the religious path, and the way to reach it, a life of purity and meditation.

As the missionaries, Childers believed that 'the end of existence' could only mean annihilation of being. The controversy this caused in Childers' lifetime centred around his entry on *nibbāna*, part of which is quoted earlier (Guruge 1984: cxviii). The aim of the entry was to release *nibbāna* 'from the area of disputed questions' (Childers 1909: 274) through a two-tier model: 'namely that the word Nirváṇa is used to designate two different things, the state of blissful sanctification called Arhatship, and the annihilation of existence in which Arhatship ends' (Childers 1909: 266). All the positive epithets given to *nibbāna*, Childers argued, referred to the former, a state where a person could rejoice in 'the ever-present consciousness that he has triumphed over man's greatest enemy Existence' (Childers 1909: 266). But at death there was annihilation of being (Childers 1909: 267).

Did Childers, therefore, agree with Gogerly's interpretation of *anattā*? He defined the word as, 'not a self, not a soul' and refers to Gogerly (Childers 1909: 32). And Gogerly's view that it is action, *kamma*, that holds a series of births together (Bishop 1908, II: 217) is strongly underscored, although Childers also stresses that *kamma* works through *upādāna* (grasping) (Childers 1875: 525). *Kamma*, for instance, is first presented as, 'doing, action, work' and then as the religious doctrine of:

> the efficacy of good and bad works, being inseparably bound up with that of transmigration or renewed existence. Every being who is not immediately qualified for Nirváṇa by the attainment of Arhatship is necessarily reborn after death in another world, and what that world is, and his state therein, depends on his Kamma or action in previous existences... The actions of a being are the cause of its re-birth, and

> consequently of its continued existence, and hence the whole existing universe of sentient beings has its origin in Kamma.
>
> (Childers 1909: 178)

This passage also shows, I believe, that he was more willing to admit than Gogerly that this implied continuity of being.

The practice of meditation enters the Dictionary through the definitions of *bhāvanā*, *jhāna*, *karunā*, *muditā* and *samādhi. Bhāvanā* is defined as, 'Producing, increasing, developing, being devoted to realizing, attaining, earnest consideration, meditation'. Reference is made to the *Saṅgīti Sutta's* mention of *kāyabhāvanā* (development of the emotional body), *cittabhāvanā* (development of the mind), *paññābhāvanā* (development of wisdom)[5] (Childers 1909: 85) but no explanation is given of them. Spence Hardy's five-fold grouping (the *Brahmavihāras – mettā*, *karunā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā* – and *asubha*) is also mentioned but not explained. Little analysis in fact is given within this entry of either the purpose or the techniques of meditation, although activism is implied. Of all the Pāli terms mentioned, only Spence Hardy's fivesome are dictionary entries in their own right, and only in the definitions of *karunā* and *muditābhāvanā* is meditation mentioned. '*Karuṇábhávaná*', mentioned within the entry on *karunā*, is defined as, 'exercising the meditation of pity or sympathy, fixing the mind intently on the idea of human suffering and the wish to relieve it' (Childers 1909: 190).

The entry on '*Jhānaṁ*' links the concept with rebirth in one of the heavens and with 'the power of working miracles (*iddhi*)'. It is 'religious meditation or abstraction of the mind, mystic or abstract meditation, ecstacy, trance'. Childers continues, 'The four Jhánas are four stages of mystic meditation, whereby the believer's mind is purged from all earthly emotions, and detached as it were from the body, which remains plunged in a profound trance'. There is mention of the 'priest' secluding himself and sitting crosslegged, 'shutting out the world' and concentrating his mind on a single thought (Childers 1909: 169).

As for *samādhi* (meditative concentration) the concept that dominates Childers' definition is tranquillity rather than concentration, although the phrase 'self-concentration' is used. He writes:

> As a technical term samádhi is a state of supernatural tranquillity or calm, and is one of the most characteristic attributes of the *Arhat*. . . This calm might amount to absolute unconsciousness as the higher *Jhána*, or may, as in the *Arhat*, consist in the annihilation of passion and a mastery over the emotions which influence ordinary men.
>
> (Childers 1909: 423)

Childers, therefore, avoids too lengthy a description of meditation and presents an interpretation which could well have influenced both Rhys Davids and Copleston in its emphasis on tranquillity and trance. It differs little from Gogerly, except for

Childers' positive recognition of meditation on compassion (*karunā*) and benignity (*muditā*) (Childers 1909: 249).

Dickson: an activist path of compassion and mental culture

A paper read to the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (RASCB) in 1883 on the daily practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka sheds light on why Dickson could later write so movingly on the 'life of charity' of the Sinhala people. Interestingly, it is not the Four Noble Truths or the Five Precepts that he places at the heart of daily practice, but a non-canonical popular formulation, the *dasa kusala kamma* (the ten wholesome actions): liberality (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), giving or transferring merit (*patti*), rejoicing in another's merit (*pattānumodana*), performance of religious obligations and rituals (*veyyāvacca*), paying homage (*apacāyana*), preaching (*desanā*), listening to preaching (*suti*), and right belief (*diṭṭhi*). Each is portrayed positively. Each is also linked with what Dickson sees as core Buddhist doctrine. Ritual is played down, and the following elements given particular emphasis: communal harmony and affection between persons; self-examination and self-purification and an altruistic, *nibbanā*-oriented striving.

For instance, *veyyāvacca*, sometimes interpreted as referring only to religious rituals, becomes the obligation of 'helping the helpless': 'The duty of rendering assistance to the sick and infirm, to one's parents, to one's teachers, and others' (Dickson 1884: 206). Similarly, his treatment of *sīla*, as an obligatory practice, brings the Five Precepts into the centre, as the foundation of village harmony (Dickson 1884: 204).

The question of self-examination enters in Dickson's discussion of *diṭṭhi*, usually translated as 'right belief'. Dickson interprets it as 'rejection of heresy' and his explanation reveals a more positive understanding of the Buddhist path of mind-training than many of his contemporaries. When a man places faith in the Three Gems (Buddha, *Dhamma*, *Sangha*), Dickson explains, 'he must examine himself and put out from his heart all desire, hate, ignorance, vanity, heresy, doubt, sloth, arrogance, shamelessness, hardness of heart – *lobho*, *doso*, *moho*, *māno*, *diṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā*, *thinaṁ*, *uddhaccaṁ*, *ahirikā*, *anottappaṁ*' (Dickson 1884: 206). In other words, not all 'passions' have to be eradicated but only those harmful to self and society – a direct challenge to nihilistic representations.

Speaking of *bhāvanā*, the third 'action', Dickson follows Childers by referring readers to Spence Hardy's fivesome. Only in the interpretation of *asubha* does he differ from Spence Hardy, but the difference is crucial. Spence Hardy, quite accurately, interpreted it as aversion and disgust (Spence Hardy 1850: 247). Dickson prefers to look beyond the literal meaning to its purpose: the realization of impermanence, casting away desires and the need 'to look only to *Nirvána*, which alone is permanent, where there is no birth, and therefore neither decay nor misery' (Dickson 1884: 205).

There is no pessimism in Dickson's Buddhist path, but a *nibbāna*-orientated striving. And *nibbāna* is seen as positive, a state beyond *aniccā* and *dukkha*. Although the reference to casting off desires could imply a movement towards apathy, the dominant message precludes this. Compassion and charity are central to the Buddhist life Dickson witnesses. It is clinging to egoistic self-promotion that Dickson sees Buddhism condemning.

When describing the life of the monastic Sangha in the second part of this paper, Dickson also avoids linking the detachment of the monastic with indifference. He concentrates on a day in the life of a monk during *Vas*, the annual rains retreat for the monastic Sangha. The monk rises before daybreak to meditate on the Buddha's virtues, loving kindness, the body's impurities and death. He spends the morning in instruction and study and worships the Buddha in the image house. After lunch, he meditates on the ten objects[6] and continues throughout the day in study, instruction, worship and meditation. The discipline presented combines activist as well as introspective elements. Key Pāli texts are translated – *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta*, *Maṅgala Sutta*, *Ratana Sutta*, *Mettā Sutta* – which then become a vehicle for his presentation of doctrine.[7]

Dickson's doctrinal emphasis, therefore, was on Buddhism as a path of practical morality and mind training, centring on charity and the destruction of selfish impulses, as expressed in the *dasa kusala kamma* and *suttas* such as the *Maṅgala* and *Mettā*. The goal of the Buddhist religious life is seen as liberation from the suffering of human existence through the gaining of a state free from misery and impermanence.

Concluding remarks

It is to the credit of both Childers and Dickson that their breadth of vision led them to speak appreciatively and with great enthusiasm about a religion different from the one that claimed their first allegiance. Important to this narrative is that both entered a discourse of contest, setting themselves up to challenge some of their contemporaries, intensifying dialogue among the British themselves on the meaning of Buddhism.

13

CONTRASTING SCHOLARS

R.S. Copleston and T.W. Rhys Davids

> You will have observed also that the contents of the books are not mythological, nor theological, nor metaphysical, but above all ethical, and in the second place, psychological.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 80)

> Dissatisfaction, or disgust, for so it may properly be rendered, is not only an intellectual conviction that there is no permanent satisfaction to be found in anything, since all things are impermanent, but also a positive shrinking from them; such a strong feeling as sends the man away from his home and his pleasures, crying, 'How repulsive these things are, now I see them in their true light.' It is under the impulse of this feeling that a man joins – such is the theory – the *Buddhist Community*.
>
> (Copleston 1892: 133–4)

Rhys Davids and Bishop Copleston agreed on the meaning of some Buddhist doctrines. But their representations of Buddhism were fathoms apart. Placing them together at this point in my narrative reinforces the polarization that had emerged by the 1870s between a construction of Buddhism that stressed rationality, activism, ethical excellence and textual purity and one that emphasized its nihilism.

Biographical information

Bishop Reginald Stephen Copleston (1845–1925) served as Bishop from 1876–1902. After a distinguished period as Fellow and tutor at St John's College, Oxford, where he sympathized with the High Church Oxford Movement, he was consecrated as Bishop in Westminster Abbey on Holy Innocents Day, 1875, at the age of 30 (Balding 1922: 59; Beven 1946: 94–5). A few days later he sailed for Sri Lanka.

From the moment he arrived, he attracted controversy. One of his first disputes was with CMS missionaries over their Tamil Coolie Mission (TCM) in the central

plantations. The TCM wanted to build its own churches, in some cases close to consecrated Anglican churches. Copleston opposed this as divisive. The conflict resulted in Copleston revoking the licenses of some CMS missionaries. Tension between the TCM's evangelical, interdenominational approach and Copleston's non-evangelical High Church stance, plus Copleston's wish to make the Diocese more important than individual missionary societies, lay behind this. The rift was resolved but others emerged.[1]

Eventually CMS missionaries were able to remember Copleston fondly. For Copleston considered himself a missionary Bishop and could speak the same language as the missionaries, particularly about Buddhism. To a missionary conference in England, for instance, he urged opposition to 'that false liberality, disloyal to our religion, by which Buddhism is flattered, its deadly character glossed over, and its supposed resemblances to Christianity monstrously exaggerated' (Copleston 1894: 251).[2] He spoke with condemnation against any complicity with Buddhism, especially through marriage[3] and urged Christians to take seriously the task of saving souls (Copleston 1880: 5). And the evangelical John Ferguson was able to praise his ability to counteract, 'the absurd glosses and glamours' of Edwin Arnold and Rhys Davids (J. Ferguson and A. Ferguson 1893: 389).

Copleston, however, spoke with other voices also. He could accommodate Buddhist requests, for instance, when a delegation urged him not to build a church near the sacred Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura.[4] At meetings of the RASCB he spoke of Buddhism's cultural heritage with respect. And in the Preface to his major work, *Buddhism Primitive and Present in Magadha and Ceylon*, he declared that, although he started with 'immovable convictions about the main principles of truth and goodness', he aimed at a 'generous' treatment of Buddhism that was willing to welcome 'all that agreed with these principles' and to favourably interpret 'all that was not opposed to them' (Copleston 1892: vii).

His principles of truth and goodness, however, were conditioned by a Eurocentricism that privileged the culture of classical Greece and Rome. Others before him had suggested that Buddhism could have influenced Greece.[5] Copleston argued the reverse, contesting, for instance, Rhys Davids' view that the *Jātaka* narratives could have passed from the East into Western mythology (Copleston 1884; Copleston 1892: 24, 303). The authenticity of Asoka's edicts is only confirmed for him because they mention Greek kings (Copleston 1892: 256–7).

Copleston claimed authenticity for his Buddhist scholarship through his knowledge of Buddhism on the ground. Although he claimed to have read 'a large part of the original sacred books' (Copleston 1892: vi), he boasted that his understanding of Buddhism had been guided 'by the living commentary', namely his discussions with 'those who have been familiar all their lives with the traditional interpretation' (Copleston 1888: 113–15). For Copleston, the living witness of Buddhists could stand in judgement over the text, particularly over European interpretations of it.

Buddhists criticized Copleston's interpretation of Buddhism in his own lifetime. One admitted that the Bishop did not, like many missionaries, use, 'the black

brush alone', but added devastatingly, 'The Bishop will not stoop to pick up such ignoble weapons; but will fully and freely admire the luxuriance of the leaves and the flowers, only to deliberately lay the axe at the very root of the tree'.[6] Copleston's 'axe' was certainly for what he saw as Buddhism's root. But there is an intriguing paragraph near the end of his major work that points to another agenda: hope for co-operation between religions in the pursuit of virtue:

> As promoters, in the long-run, of Christianity, I reckon all who are diffusing knowledge of the true tenets and history of Buddhism; all who are letting in light, by whatever channel, into the dark places – and some very dark places exist, and cruel habitations; – all who are insisting on what is excellent in Buddhism, when they do so not merely to praise Buddhism but to get virtue practiced.
>
> (Copleston 1892: 484)

In 1902 Copleston moved to Calcutta as the metropolitan of the Anglican Church in India and Ceylon. He stayed until 1913.

Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922) was the eldest child of a Congregational Christian clergyman. His mother died when he was barely ten. In 1866, he arrived in Sri Lanka as a writer in the Civil Service. After serving in Matale and Galle, he was posted to Anuradhapura as Assistant Government Agent. Troubles began here that led to Rhys Davids' dismissal from the Service in 1874 under a cloud of misunderstanding and bitterness (A. Wickremeratne 1984: 27–139).

In England he began the systematic study of Pāli and Theravāda Buddhism, building on the teaching Yātrāmullē Dhammārāma had given him in Sri Lanka. This led to him founding the Pali Text Society in 1881.[7] In 1882 he became Professor of Pāli at University College, London. The following decades saw him collaborating with many European scholars of Buddhism.[8]

Rhys Davids' life in Britain became a campaign for the recognition of Pāli and Buddhist studies. He brought to this the principles of his nonconformist Christian background, never truly transcending them. Isolated sentences in his writing suggest that he retained an allegiance to Christianity[9] but he also admitted:

> It is true that in my humble opinion no historian can be an adequate historian without sympathy, and indeed I confess I should not have devoted my life to the study of Buddhism, had I not felt the intrinsic worth of much that Gotama laid down.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 185)

Rhys Davids discovered in the Buddhist texts, for his mature thought was based on these and not on the lived tradition, a message he believed the West needed, and devoted his life to making it accessible. Yet his influence on lay English-speaking Sri Lankan Buddhists was also considerable. The President of the

London Lodge of the Theosophical Society in the 1880s, A.P. Sinnett, in a surprising juxtaposition, once classed Rhys Davids with the nihilist school of Spence Hardy, Gogerly, Kellogg and Copleston.[10] Certainly, Rhys Davids' early writings, on which Sinnett based this judgement, were closer in mood to the missionaries than his later ones. Eventually, however, it was Rhys Davids, not the theosophists, who was adopted as a champion of Buddhism by the English-educated lay middle classes in Sri Lanka.

In this chapter I will not cite writings by Copleston or Rhys Davids published after 1900. Copleston will be represented by his 1892 publication and shorter articles. Rhys Davids will be represented by a book he wrote for the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1877, although page numbers will be taken from the 1894 edition, which received minor changes, his American lectures of 1894–1895 and shorter articles.

The Buddha: compassionate teacher

The treatment of the Buddha by Copleston and Rhys Davids is an excellent initial illustration of the convergence of two very different agendas. Both were reductionist. In 1877 Rhys Davids' voice differed little from those before him. Arrogantly dismissive of his mainly non-canonical sources,[11] he attempts a historical synthesis acceptable to 'the language of the nineteenth century' (Rhys Davids 1894: 188). What results is a moving, quite lengthy biography that presents the Buddha as a sensitive and humane man responding to the mysteries of sorrow and death (Rhys Davids 1894: 30), 'torn by contending passions' (Rhys Davids 1894: 38) and eventually deciding to reach out to brahmanical culture with a reforming message of love and pity.

By the time he gave his American Lectures in 1894–1895, he could claim that the earliest texts yielded a historical biography and attempt to give it. Later works, such as those used by Arnold, are now dismissed as corrupt hagiography (Rhys Davids 1896: 89), and correctives are offered, for instance, that the Buddha's father was not a king but head of a high-class, ruling family and that the Buddha's wife is not named (Rhys Davids 1896: 90–117). Rhys Davids' basic stance, however, remains unchanged, with one exception. As he uncovers the *Tipiṭaka*, his attitude towards his earlier sources modifies. However corrupt, they become poetical legends of 'surprising beauty', which anticipate, 'some of the very expressions used in the Christian legend of the day of Pentecost' (Rhys Davids 1896: 107; Almond 1988: 66).

Copleston also uses a Western rationalist method to determine the historically plausible, using the *Tipiṭaka*, rather than the later biographies. But an additional agenda is also present: to counter *The Light of Asia* and other works that were placing in sympathetic parallel the lives of Jesus and the Buddha.[12] His major work, therefore, dismisses the Buddha's life before enlightenment in two pages, blasting Arnold's image of a heroic renunciation. And no points of likeness between the life of the Buddha and the life of Christ are admitted save for the coming of the sage Asita to the Buddha after birth (Copleston 1892: 35–6). This reductionist agenda

is even more apparent in an earlier article, when he declares, in a Langdon-like way, that when the credible is separated from the incredible:

> The resultant biography of Gautama shows nothing supernatural and nothing which in those days was strange. Many a highborn man, in middle life, 'went out', as it was called, from the 'household life', into the 'homeless life', to pursue in an ascetic career the inquiry after 'deliverance'.
>
> (Copleston 1888: 121)

Once the Buddha as more-than-human hero has been undermined, however, sympathy can be allowed. In *Buddhism Primitive and Present*, Copleston repeatedly stresses the qualities that attracted commoners and kings to the Buddha:

> His youth – he had not waited as most men did till the bloom of life was rubbed off; – the dignity and grace of deportment which the tradition, probably with truth, assigns to him; his singular courtesy, and readiness; the wealth of illustration with which he set forth his tenets.
>
> (Copleston 1892: 21–2)

And the illustrative narratives he selects from the *Tipiṭaka* stress positive character traits such as generosity to rival teachers (Copleston 1892: 60) and kindness to a sick monk (Copleston 1892: 63). 'The picture which is given to us of Gotama', he declares, 'represents a character not only calm and gentle, but active, genial, not devoid of humour, deeply sympathetic and intensely human' (Copleston 1892: 97).

Doctrinal perspectives

Both Rhys Davids, in his 1877 account, and Copleston, in his major work, itemize the Four Noble Truths within their biographies of Buddha at the point of the Buddha's first sermon, using the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (Rhys Davids 1894: 47–9; Copleston 1892: 43–4).[13] But the Truths were not always their point of entry into Buddhist doctrine. In his American Lectures, for instance, Rhys Davids places the 'Chain of Causation' (*paṭiccasamupāda*) first and both writers placed particular emphasis on *anicca*, impermanence.

Anicca *and* Anattā

Rhys Davids described *anicca* in this way:

> there is nothing, either divine or human, either animal, vegetable or material, which is *permanent*. There is no being, – there is only becoming . . . as soon as there is a beginning, there begins also, that moment, to be an ending.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 121–2)

It entailed *anattā* (no-soul) as logical consequence. Every person is a 'component individuality', Rhys Davids declared, and 'As the relation of its component parts one to another is ever changing, so it is never the same for two consecutive moments; and no sooner has separateness, individuality begun, then dissolution, disintegration, also begins' (Rhys Davids 1896: 122).

Copleston stressed *anicca* more than *anattā*, as the defining mark of the Buddhist universe. 'Simpler and truer than the First Truth' (Copleston 1892: 128), it was the 'deep-lying link' that bound Buddhism's moral system to its metaphysics, since it conditioned the distaste for life that led to renunciation (Copleston 1892: 129). And, as Rhys Davids, he saw *anattā* following logically from this. The self is merely a combination of faculties and characters that dissolves at death (Copleston 1892: 114). But he is aware that the texts do not equate this with annihilation: 'the succeeding being, in the next birth, is 'Na ca so, na ca anno': 'Not the same and not another'!' (Copleston 1888: 127).

The difference here between the two lies in interpretation. Rhys Davids fits *anattā* into the image of the Buddha as a reformer, who 'ignored and despised' the rest of Indian thought, creating a 'new system entirely independent of all the previous spirit hypotheses' (Rhys Davids 1887: 119). In later works, he gives this a positive twist, in an Arnold-like way. 'Belief in the permanence and eternity of a semi-material soul' he stresses, is seen by Buddhists as a hindrance to all that is noble in life (Rhys Davids 1896: 123–4). He adds:

> Secondly, it is a belief common to all schools of the Buddhists that the origin of sorrow is precisely identical with the origin of individuality. Sorrow is in fact the result of the effort which an individual has to make to keep separate from the rest of existence.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 124)

For Rhys Davids, therefore, *dukkha* is not an inherent quality of existence, nor is the suppression of desire part of the Path. The following seems to be a direct address to his contemporaries:

> It is a common blunder in English treatises on Buddhism that the Buddhist scriptures, or Gotama himself, inculcated the extinction of desire. There is not one passage in the Buddhist books to support so absurd a contention. Lusts, craving, longing, excitement, greed, all that lies at the root of that unworthy scramble for wealth or power or social position so characteristic of the un-Christian life of modern Christian cities, is undoubtedly condemned in many passages; and is even stated, under the frequent simile of burning thirst, to be the ultimate cause of all sorrow. But the cultivation of right desires is an essential part of Buddhist ethics.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1887: 125)

Copleston's conclusion was in direct contrast. The function of *anicca* was to create disgust for life and to hold up as role model one who, 'must not love life; but must

fix his mind on the idea of dissolution, transitoriness; and convince himself that he need not, and in fact in some sense does not, now exist' (Copleston 1892: 115). Because of the doctrine of *anicca*, Copleston saw Buddhism as saying that *dukkha* is inherent within existence, inseparable from it, incapable of eradication except by cessation of being, in direct line with the missionaries of earlier decades. 'End all, and *that* is bliss', was the message Copleston saw the Buddha communicating (Copleston 1888: 125).

Nibbāna – psychological liberation or annihilation

Although both Copleston and Rhys Davids link *nibbāna* with extinction, their approaches are again so polarized that the underlying similarity between them is hardly recognizable. Using Gogerly's logic, Copleston usually interprets *nibbāna* as extinction without qualification (Copleston 1892: 73, 82), except once, when he appears to draw on Childers to stress that extinction operates only when the enlightened one dies (Copleston 1888: 132–3). In contrast to Childers, however, *nibbāna* in this life is represented as a state of trance-like unconsciousness, which he can only concede to be happy because its opposite, conscious awareness, is deemed to be misery.

Rhys Davids' interpretation also agrees with Childers in that he stresses *nibbāna* is to be enjoyed in this life only (Rhys Davids 1896: 163). But he is much truer to Childers than Copleston. As early as 1877, he could write, in a direct challenge to the negative interpretation:

> What then is Nirvāna, which means simply going out, extinction? (it being quite clear, from what has gone before, that this cannot be the extinction of a soul). *It is the extinction of that sinful, grasping condition of mind and heart, which would otherwise, according to the great mystery of Karma, be the cause of renewed individual existence*. That extinction is to be brought about by, and runs parallel with, the growth of the opposite condition of mind and heart; and it is complete when that opposite condition is reached. Nirvāna is therefore the same thing as a *sinless, calm state of mind*: and if translated at all, may best, perhaps, be rendered 'holiness' – holiness, that is, in the Buddhist sense, *perfect peace*, *goodness and wisdom*.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1894: 111–12)

For Rhys Davids, the state of the *arahat*, one who has reached the goal of the Buddhist path, represented moral triumph and inner psychological victory over the delusion of self (Rhys Davids 1896: 132). It was the going out of lust, ill will and delusion (Rhys Davids 1896: 164). It was liberation. In his American Lectures, he quoted many passages to show how the texts attempted to, 'describe the glory of this state of victory over the world, and over birth and death, of an

inward peace that can never be shaken, of a joy that can never be ruffled' (Rhys Davids 1896: 166). Harmony between humans, peace, bliss, freedom from distress, perfection of moral life and a heart filled with tender love are mentioned.[14]

The Buddhist religious path: negative withdrawal or vigorous discipline

When Copleston first mentions Buddhist ethics in his major work, he claims that they cannot be separated from the general laws of being and that Gotama based his rules of conduct on the Noble Truths (Copleston 1892: 88). Meditation, 'by which knowledge is brought to bear on conduct' is seen as a link between the two. Later, however, he contradicts himself, writing that the 'great dogmas' such as the Noble Truths and *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) have, 'no ascertained connection with conduct', adding as example, 'There are innumerable passages which urge the destruction of lust and desire, but is there one in which the method recommended for destroying it is founded on its being the immediate effect of "sensation"?' (Copleston 1892: 126). His conclusion is that, 'The moral system as we find it in the books would lose nothing by the removal of the Four Truths and the Chain of Causation' (Copleston 1892: 126). The existence of the Eightfold Path confirms his conclusion. He claims magisterially that it is never explained in the texts: 'there is no Eightfold Path to be found in the books, no eight branches of study or practice corresponding to the eight names' (Copleston 1892: 127).

When Copleston moves to ethical specifics, however, as many writers before him, he finds much that he can praise. He stresses that gentleness and calm is the ideal of the Buddhist moralist: 'a gentleness that rises into positive love, and a calm which is based upon strength and resolution' (Copleston 1892: 97). He adds earnestness to this – 'to be earnest, to be awake, to strive, and not to give up' (Copleston 1892: 98) – and purity. He explains that the removal of evil is the principal object of effort and the cultivation of kindly feeling, the positive aim. When he looks at vices and virtues in Buddhism, he warms particularly to condemnation of hatred and ill will, and the treatment of the vice of pride. Although he dismisses the ten perfections, *pāramitā*, as only relevant to Buddhas, he praises '*mettam*' (loving kindness) as the glory of Buddhism (Copleston 1892: 159). In the course of his lengthy examples, compassion, filial piety, reverence for age, liberality and self-sacrifice are mentioned.[15] This leads him to say:

> Nor can any reader, who has before him the passages which we have been considering in this chapter, claim for either Old or New Testament the exclusive communication to man of the theory of disinterested kindness and the law of love. The same Holy Spirit who wrote our Scriptures gave to some of the Buddhist teachers no despicable measure of insight into these truths.
>
> (Copleston 1892: 171)

Barbs, however, are hidden in his praise. The Buddhist concept of calmness, for example, is the calm 'of dreamless unconsciousness' and 'utter isolation from all other beings' (Copleston 1892: 99). But most telling of all is that he reduces these positive attributes to the first stages of the spiritual path. The dominant path that Copleston detects in Buddhism is not earnest striving but the cultivating of indifference, and the dominant ideal, not compassion but, 'to meditate on the worthlessness of all and so to care for none' (Copleston 1892: 140). Reaching this through the chain of dependent origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, he argues that, if existence is perpetuated through attaching oneself to objects out of ignorance (Copleston 1888: 125, 1892: 123), then the way to end this process must be to stop the mind identifying names and form (Copleston 1892: 124, 140) until consciousness is gone and with it, impulses to bad and good, and love (Copleston 1892: 142).

Only once in my data does Copleston give unstinting praise to Buddhist ethics – when he speaks about King Asoka, India's Buddhist monarch of the third century BCE. In Asoka, Copleston finds a 'strikingly Buddhist' morality (Copleston 1892: 271) stripped of the Four Noble Truths and *nibbāna*. It appeals to him so much that he suggests that, 'the royal teacher rises perhaps to a higher level than the Pitakas attain' (Copleston 1892: 270), adding, 'In him Buddhism inspired perhaps the greatest effort, in scale at any rate, on behalf of good, that was ever made by man, outside of Christianity. The rules and the books are insignificant in his presence' (Copleston 1892: 280). If Copleston could have identified Buddhism with Asoka's edicts, his judgement on Buddhism would probably have been entirely different.

Rhys Davids' analysis of Buddhism's ethical path changed with time. In 1877, he spoke of 'the intricate and obscure system of Buddhist metaphysics' and implied a dualism of metaphysics and ethics within the religion (Rhys Davids 1894: 124). Later, his principal stance was that the Buddha rejected metaphysics and created a system totally dependent on ethics. Any hint of dualism slipped away. The ethical moved centre stage, with emphasis on the Eightfold Path.

Self-culture was the key to this Path for Rhys Davids. Through it, a person was progressively purified of such things as sensuality, malevolence, pride, self-righteousness and love of individual existence (Rhys Davids 1894: 108–9). It involved a 'modification and growth' in a person's 'inner nature' brought about by 'self-control and diligence' and 'intellectual and moral' self discipline (Rhys Davids 1894: 54–5). Whereas for Copleston, the 'liberated' one had killed every emotion and ceased to differentiate between worldly phenomena, for Rhys Davids, the *arahat*, 'sees and values all things in his life at their true value . . . he only experiences right desires for himself, and tender pity and regard and exalted spiritual love for others' (Rhys Davids 1894: 109). The *arahat* is not indifference but loving kindness embodied. He has not closed his eyes to the world but sees it more clearly.

In his American Lectures, Rhys Davids seems to address missionary perspectives directly when explaining the first 5 of 10 *saṁyojana* (fetters). The first

(*sakkāya diṭṭhi*) translated as 'the delusion of self', is presented as a consciousness of the 'sorrow that is inherent in individuality' and a banishing of the expressions 'this is I' and 'this is mine' (Rhys Davids 1896:142). Doubt, *vicikicchā*, is defined as doubt in the Buddha's message that humanity can save itself, a definition that places self-culture in the fore as a positive path. The third, *sīlabbataparāmāsa*, becomes the belief that, 'mere morality in the ordinary sense, the mere performance, however exact, of outward duties, can alone suffice' (Rhys Davids 1896: 147), directly challenging the view that Buddhist morality was only about merit-making. Breaking the fetter of *kāma* or sensuality is explained neither as retreat into asceticism nor a denying of all comfort, but as developing a mind that is neither occupied with the satisfaction or suppression of ordinary passions (Rhys Davids 1896: 148). His explanation of *paṭigha* or *vyāpāda*, ill-will, offers the *Brahmavihāra*, 'Love, Pity, Sympathy and Equanimity', as its antidote, contesting the missionary view that the path involves cultivating indifference (Rhys Davids 1896: 148–9).

Both Copleston and Rhys Davids, therefore, stressed that the Buddhist Path involved getting rid of the wish for future existence as an individual. Both agreed that the destruction of ill-will and hatred was part of the way towards this. The similarities ended there. Copleston could find no clear textual explanation of the Eightfold Path; Rhys Davids outlined it as a commendable path of action. Copleston found *paṭiccasamuppāda* obscure and ultimately nihilistic; Rhys Davids admitted that more work needed to be done on its meaning (Rhys Davids 1896: 161), but saw it as a scientific explanation of the existence of evil and the emergence of individuality. Copleston insisted that the Buddhist path involved killing intellect and desire; Rhys Davids stressed its rootedness in intellectual and moral self-discipline. Copleston dwelt but little on lay ethics; Rhys Davids seemed to delight in quoting from the wealth of *suttas* dealing with it,[16] convinced that the main distinction was not between lay and ordained but between 'converted' and 'unconverted' (Rhys Davids 1887: 120).

Meditation

Copleston realized that meditation was central to the Buddhist Path, but, as others before him, he could make no sense of it. It is also probable that he drew on Rhys Davids at the point when Rhys Davids was at his weakest. Both seem to start with little more than the assumption of Gogerly and Childers that meditation involves mesmerism or trance. When Copleston first mentions it, two types are given: one by which knowledge is brought to bear on conduct and the other by which truth is arrived at (Copleston 1892: 89). But since Buddhist 'Truth' for Copleston involved leading the mind to unconsciousness, then he concludes that the goal of meditation must be indifference (Copleston 1892: 99). He, therefore, insists that meditation is designed to maintain a sense of distaste (Copleston 1892: 129). It is a withdrawal from all things to nothing (Copleston 1892: 143). Its stages are 'unmeaning, and indeed, impossible states of abstraction' (Copleston 1892: 148).

Rhys Davids, in 1877, can relate reasonably well to the meditative absorptions, the *jhāna*. He quotes the standard canonical description and links them with supernatural powers, *iddhi*. He declares them an 'obscure but very instructive side of Buddhist teaching' (Rhys Davids 1894: 174) and senses that they refer to an exalted, ecstatic state that 'has been reached by others besides Buddhists' (Rhys Davids 1894: 176). *Samādhi*, on the other hand, is dismissed as 'a self-induced mesmeric trance, supposed to be a proof of superior holiness' (Rhys Davids 1894: 177). Incredulous at its possibility, he claims that it mistakes, 'loss of mental power' for, 'the highest mental activity'. His conclusion is that *samādhi* is of small practical importance within Buddhism (Rhys Davids 1894: 177).

It is 'intellectual activity' that appeals to Rhys Davids, not the quietism he links with meditation (Rhys Davids 1896: 183). The maintaining of an active, watchful mind, vigilant to catch and eradicate what is unwholesome and to promote what is good, is the core of Rhys Davids' Buddhism. And he did not see meditation as having anything to do with this.

Kamma

The doctrine of *kamma*, action, presented difficulties to both Rhys Davids and Copleston. Both followed their predecessors by downplaying the etymological meaning of the word, preferring to see it only as a principle connected with rebirth. Their problem, therefore, was how *kamma* conditioned continuity across births. In his earlier writing, Rhys Davids claimed that belief in the effects of *kamma* was a 'non-existent fiction of the brain', one of four areas where Buddhism was wrong (Rhys Davids 1894: 102).[17] His unease is caused by an inability to believe that all a person does can be concentrated on just one new living being, and that each one of us inherits *kamma* from only one previous person, who determines our present state.

In Rhys Davids' later writings, the ground has shifted. Less willing to judge, he strives for a sympathetic interpretation, claiming that humans, 'are the mere temporary and passing result of causes that have been at work during immeasurable ages in the past, and that will continue to act for ages yet to come' (Rhys Davids 1896: 127). Humans are, therefore, part of a chain, no link of which can, 'continue to be by itself without the rest' (Rhys Davids 1896: 128). Whether all that a person does is concentrated in just one new living being is avoided:

> There is a real identity between a man in his present life and in the future. But the identity is not in a conscious soul which shall fly out away from his body after he is dead. The real identity is that of cause and effect. A man thinks he began to be a few years – twenty, forty, sixty years – ago. There is some truth in that; but in a much larger, deeper, truer sense he has been (in the causes of which he is the result) for countless ages in the past; and those same causes (of which he is the

> temporary effect) will continue in other like temporary forms through countless ages yet to come. In that sense alone, according to Buddhism, each of us has after death a continuing life.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 128)

Copleston also struggles to create coherence but cannot avoid an ambiguity that probably represented contemporary attitudes more accurately than Rhys Davids. ‘A fatal tendency to reproduce life’ is one of his first phrases about *kamma* (Copleston 1892: 114). It is ‘the moral result of the past combinations in that series’ which passes on from the past life to a new one (Copleston 1892: 115). He continues, ‘It is this continuity that makes the Buddhist say, “he goes” and attribute to one being the whole series of lives’ (Copleston 1892: 115). Here he ascribes continuity across lives only to karmic force: ‘Nothing passes on from the past life to the new one, except the force which tends to form a new combination of life-elements’ (Copleston 1892: 115). Yet, on the previous page, in another contradiction, he speaks about a ‘recombination’ of elements after death rather than the formation of a completely new being: ‘And so, no sooner is a man dead, by the dissolution of his life-elements, than he comes into being again, by their re-combination’ (Copleston 1892: 114).

Buddhism in practice

Both Rhys Davids and Copleston drew distinctions between different strands of Buddhism. Copleston’s were between monk and lay; core metaphysical doctrine and the narrative tradition and the Buddhist Revival compared with village religiosity. Rhys Davids’ main distinction was between what he judged to be the original *Theravāda* teaching and *Mahāyāna* and Tantric developments.

In a chapter entitled, ‘The Buddhism now taught in Ceylon’ Copleston arrogantly dismissed popular cosmological and biographical narratives as ‘boundless nonsense’. But he admits they have ‘for the Indian mind a solemn charm’, and lend ‘majesty to Buddhism’ although not of Buddhist origin (Copleston 1892: 424). Such narrative had kept Buddhism alive he believed (Copleston 1892: 425–6). But his judgement was that it offered the people a Buddhism very different from that of the *Piṭakas* (Copleston 1892: 414).

This is connected with the distinction he makes between lay and ordained, based on *Sutta Nipāta* verse 221 (Copleston 1892: 205).[18] He goes as far as to suggest that the five precepts were not part of Gotama’s original proclamation but could have been extracted for the laity from the monks’ rule of life as a popular system with a more humble goal than that of the Four Noble Truths (Copleston 1892: 184). The gulf had widened over the centuries, he believed, through the incorporation of Hindu influences and demon worship into lay religiosity. In effect, this means he dismisses most of the content of his major book as followed only by an elite handful of diligent monks. For the laity, the path centred on rebirth in the heavens – ‘an indefinite continuance of life in happy places’. Only

for the *nibbāna*-orientated monk did the path involve seeking ‘ a passionless calm beyond the reach of temptation, doubt or effort’ (Copleston 1892: 216).[19]

When Copleston comments on the Buddhist Revival, his conclusions are very similar to those of Gordon Cumming, their books coincidentally published in the same year. He cites growth of learning among monks, temples and shrines restored, pilgrimages reactivated and enthusiasm reborn. And, as Cumming, he stresses that the Revival is ‘virtually a foreign growth’, under Western guidance (Copleston 1894: 250, 1892: 461). In *The Buddhist Catechism*, for instance, which he attributes to Hikkaḍuwē Sumaṃgala, Copleston detects a doctrine completely different from village religiosity. Pointing to the Catechism’s denial of a personal God, he declares, ‘The living Buddhist does, as a fact, believe in personal deity; and herein his belief is better than his creed’ (Copleston 1892: 478).

Rhys Davids’ distinctions move into a space far larger than Sri Lanka. Wherever Buddhism went, he claims, it developed beliefs inconsistent with its origins, which Rhys Davids equates with the Theravāda *Tipiṭaka* (Rhys Davids 1896: 188). This means that many Sri Lankan Buddhist ideas are ‘altogether outside of Buddhism’ (Rhys Davids 1894: 7). But his greatest ire is directed not towards these but towards Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism. His 1877 book devotes two chapters to this. He begins with *bodhisattvas*, claiming that they are hypothetical beings (Rhys Davids 1894: 201). He goes on to *Dhyāni-Buddhas* (meditation Buddhas) and the Tibetan belief in an *Ādi-Buddha* (a primordial Buddha) All, in Rhys Davids’ eyes, contradict Gotama’s original ‘own power’ message. They were, ‘forgeries of the brain’, smothering with metaphysical subtleties, ‘the nobler and simpler lessons of the founder’ (Rhys Davids 1894: 207). As for Tantric Buddhism, he links it with the savage and the idolatrous, using a vocabulary of horror that rivalled the missionary representation of demon worship (Rhys Davids 1894: 209).

In his later writing, Buddhist Tantra is still linked with the uncivilized (Rhys Davids 1896: 188), but his vocabulary is not so inflammatory. His American Lectures claim that the same ‘spirit of the system’ breathes through all Buddhism’s modifications. In more measured tones he accounts for the *Mahāyāna Bodhisattva* ideal, a re-entry of the soul theory and the belief that the Buddha was above ordinary laws (Rhys Davids 1896: 190–212). His conclusion, however, is still that these were contradictions of the Buddha’s original message.

The upshot of this is that Rhys Davids’ positive representation of Buddhism is accompanied by strident criticism of Buddhism in practice, whether in Sri Lanka, other parts of Asia or by the theosophists. For instance, his judgement on the Buddhist input at the Chicago Parliament of Religions is that there is an astounding ‘gulf on all sides between popular beliefs and the conclusions of scholarship’ (Rhys Davids 1896: 216). He quotes words from the ‘Right Rev. Zitsuzen Ashitsu’ of Japan on *nibbāna* and concludes:

> But the curious thing about it is that the views here ascribed to the Hīna Yāna, cannot be found, so far as we know, in any Hīna Yāna book. And

> this difficulty does not seem to have occurred to the learned author, who also distinctly states that the Mahā Yāna books (really many centuries later) were compiled by the disciples of the Buddha, meaning no doubt his personal followers.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 217)

Re-education was the key, he believed, flowing from the West:

> When Japanese students, for instance, come to our Western colleges and learn there to read their Pali and Sanskrit books under the guidance of professors trained in historical criticism, it is almost impossible that they can return to their own country without the accuracy of their knowledge being greatly improved, and their ideas of Buddhism, to some extent at least, corrected and modified.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1896: 214–15)

Concluding comments

One of Copleston's judgements was that Buddhism was anti-intellectual and dogmatic (Copleston 1892: 93), for the simple reason that intellectual activity would disprove the Noble Truths and fail to produce disgust in life (Copleston 1892: 106). More fundamentally, Copleston judged false what he saw as the starting point of Buddhism: that existence is without joy (Copleston 1892: 117–18).

Consistent throughout Rhys Davids' writings was his conviction that he could define pure, original Buddhism, through textual study, and that this gave him and other Western scholars the right to re-educate Asian Buddhists. Self-improvement, diligence and moral striving lay at the centre of this pure Buddhism, qualities uncannily similar to those found in nonconformist Protestant Christianity. Unlike Copleston, he saw intellectualism rather than anti-intellectualism in Buddhism, a facing of reality rather than a denial of it, and a path of liberation rather than a way towards indifference. He condemned what did not fit into this paradigm, for instance, the theosophist view that there was an esoteric Buddhism. But his early writings did not escape influence from nihilistic constructions (Rhys Davids 1894: 49–50). As late as 1888, he was capable of a paragraph, which, if taken out of context, could have been written by a missionary in the contrast it draws between Christianity and Buddhism.[20] Yet, more than many others in this section, in a linear development from Forbes and Knighton, he sought and communicated the positive. And in the light of contemporary debates about alterity, and multiple religious identity, it would be interesting to speculate whether Christianity and Buddhism were both part of his identity, held together with some difficulty in an uneasy but perhaps positive tension.[21] Risking simplification, the two figures contrast an activist interpretation of Buddhism with one that stressed withdrawal from action, and a positive view of self-culture with one that condemned the idea of self-help as 'the most pitiless' ever made (Copleston 1888: 126).

14

BALANCING THE EXOTERIC AND THE ESOTERIC

Theosophists in Sri Lanka

> But you must recognise one fact, and that is that the Buddhism they [westerners] are so eagerly accepting is not the mere popular Buddhism of Ceylon; it is a Buddhism purified – cleansed from the excrescences that *must* in time gather upon every faith, imposed on it by selfish men for interested purposes.
>
> (Powell 1889: 331)

This is Charles F. Powell, an American theosophist, speaking in Colombo's Theosophical Hall. His words were arrogant, self-possessed and certainly offensive to some of his Buddhist listeners.

Rhys Davids could have said something similar. But the parallel would be skin deep. Although those attracted to theosophy were a diverse bunch, three generalizations can be made about those who came to Sri Lanka, each separating them from Rhys Davids. First, they were the first Western interpreters of Buddhism in the country who viewed Buddhism through eyes passionately antagonistic to Christianity. Second, they all made public avowals of Buddhism on arrival, taking the 3 refuges and the 5 precepts in the presence of revivalist monks such as Hikkaḍuwē Sumaṃgala. Third, their attachment to Buddhism, with a few exceptions, was not rooted in a privileging of the Theravāda texts but in Buddhism's perceived relationship to theosophist principles. These factors conditioned both their representation of Buddhism and the response it received in Sri Lanka. What emerged differed substantially from Rhys Davids' path of textual reconstruction, the hands-on empirical appreciation of Dickson and the enthusiastic immersion of a convert like Allen Bennett.

The beginnings

Theosophy began in America when Colonel Olcott (1832–1907), social reformer and spiritualist, met Russian émigré, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), and discovered that they shared an interest in common: the reform of spiritualism. The Theosophical Society resulted, founded in 1875. Its aim, as the name suggests

(*Theos*, God; *Sophia*, wisdom), was to seek ‘a knowledge of God and the higher spirits’ (Prothero 1996: 49), hardly one that spoke of closeness to Buddhism. The initial focus was not, in fact, the religions of Asia at all, but an occult heritage that went no further than the Near East. Interest in Asia came later, when the original objective of reforming spiritualism had failed (Prothero 1996: 62).

The change began with Blavatsky’s 1877 book, *Unveiling Isis*. It had two important themes: hatred of Christianity; ‘devotion to an ancient Asian wisdom tradition on which all the world’s religions (with the possible exception of Christianity) were constructed and to which all converge’ (Prothero 1996: 58). Correspondence with religious leaders in India and Sri Lanka followed. By the time Olcott and Blavatsky travelled from India to Sri Lanka in May 1880, to be followed by a stream of other theosophists,[1] theosophy had bound itself firmly to the conviction that Hinduism and Buddhism were closest to their idea of the Wisdom behind all religion.[2]

Under this ideological canopy, differences of approach coexisted, not always peacefully. The temperaments of the two founders illustrate this. Olcott’s approach was exoteric and practical, rooted in the idea of ethical universals and collaboration across continents. His letters to the venerable Doḍandūvē Piyaratana Tissa (1826–1907), a revivalist monk based at Sailabimbarama temple in the southern coastal town of Dodanduva,[3] reveal eagerness to learn from the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.[4] When compiling his Buddhist catechism, he worked with the venerable Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṃgala, but also drew on orientalists such as Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Fausböll, Bigandet, Muller, Lillie, Dutt and Paul Carus. Blavatsky, on the other hand, looked primarily to the esoteric. She was a philosopher, a creator of systems into which Buddhism could fit. Her writing betrays little evidence that she was interested in living Buddhists. According to Prothero, this led to disagreements between the founders over goals and method (Prothero 1996: 52). The result in Sri Lanka was that the theosophists communicated different, and sometimes confusing, messages. Under the ‘Olcott’ influence, ritual with metacosmic significance was downplayed, ethical living was all. Under the Blavatsky influence, the metacosmic was appealed to in abundance, but with a vocabulary alien to the Theravāda Buddhist tradition.

These words from Olcott’s *Old Diary Leaves*, quoted by Obeyesekere, however, reveal that both leaders concurred in one thing: that their taking of the 3 refuges and the 5 precepts in Sri Lanka did not imply submission to the lived tradition:

> Speaking for her (Blavatsky) as well as for myself, I can say that if Buddhism contained a single dogma that we were compelled to accept, we would not have taken the *pansil* nor remained Buddhists ten minutes. Our Buddhism was that of the Master-Adept Gautama Buddha, which was identically the Wisdom-Religion of the Aryan Upanishads, and the soul of all ancient world-faiths. Our Buddhism was, in a word, a philosophy, not a creed.
>
> (Obeyesekere 1992: 4)

Theosophists in Sri Lanka

Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in Sri Lanka to a euphoric welcome from Buddhists eager to gain Western support for an already existent revivalist movement. And their contribution, together with that of other theosophists, was considerable. That the theosophists were not part of the colonial administration meant that they could work alongside Buddhist revivalists, in mutual, animated dialogue, in a way not open to many writers in this study. However, their zeal for the Buddhist cause could mask the worst of imperial attitudes, superiority and condescension.

I shall use Charles William Leadbeater (1854–1934) to convey something of the theosophist representation of Buddhism, as it was expressed in Sri Lanka, plus articles by theosophists outside Sri Lanka that were made available to English-speaking Sri Lankans through the magazine Leadbeater edited, *The Buddhist* (*TB*). My main sources will be the first volume of *TB*, *The Buddhist Catechism* by Olcott, and *The Smaller Buddhist Catechism* compiled in 1889 by Leadbeater and C. Jinarajadasa as a work for children.

Leadbeater's time in Sri Lanka from 1886–1889 was a preparatory period for a career that placed him, together with Annie Besant, at the head of the Theosophical Movement and modern occultism. The beginnings were unremarkable. Ordained an Anglican clergyman in 1878, he became a curate in Winchester (Tillett 1982: 19–26). In 1883, he encountered the Theosophical Society, having started to experiment with spiritualism. A year later, he was initiated into A.P. Sinnett's London Lodge. This led to contact with Blavatsky (Prothero 1996: 122) and eventual embarkation for India, a move that necessitated giving three days notice to his parish. Then, in 1886, under Olcott's influence, he travelled from Adyar, the Theosophist Headquarters near Madras, to Sri Lanka, to join the campaign for Buddhist schools, becoming, in November of that year, the first Principal of the Pettah Buddhist English School, later renamed Ananda College.

Leadbeater returned to England in 1889 and, in 1890, met Annie Besant, who would succeed Blavatsky as leader of the theosophical movement.[5] He became known for psychic powers, particularly the ability to investigate the former lives of theosophists, and was invited to lecture in America and continental Europe. Then, in 1909, in India, he 'discovered' Krishnamurti, whom he claimed would be the vehicle used by Lord Maitreya in his next incarnation on earth as World Teacher (Tillett 1982: 103). Under the influence of Leadbeater and Besant, the training of Krishnamurti and the hopes surrounding him dominated theosophical circles during the following decade. When Krishnamurti rejected his role and theosophy, the Theosophical Society split. Leadbeater, however, continued to be an influential figure among those interested in esoteric science. He settled in Australia and was consecrated Bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church, which, although appearing Christian, interpreted doctrine along theosophical lines. Australia remained his base until his death in 1934.

Throughout his life, Leadbeater was a controversial figure. He made amazing claims for himself: that he could communicate with the 'Masters', part of theosophy's occult hierarchy; that his psychic power had penetrated the atom; that he had explored most of the planets in the solar system in his astral body. His writing was prolific covering all aspects of esoteric philosophy and theosophy.[6] In addition, throughout his life, he faced charges of fraud and paedophilia. In May 1906, for instance, this caused his resignation from the British Section of the Theosophical Society, although he did not cut his links with theosophy (Tillett 1982: 77–90; Prothero 1996: 169).[7]

Geoffry Tillett, Leadbeater's biographer, claims, on the evidence of letters sent to A.P. Sinnett and Olcott (Tillett 1982: 267), that Leadbeater's time in Sri Lanka was lonely and difficult. He also surmises that it was during this time that Leadbeater chose to precipitate the development of psychic powers by 'forced imagination' (Tillett 1982: 266–7). Leadbeater in Sri Lanka was a young man in his thirties, newly initiated into theosophy, committed to Buddhism as the religion closest to it. Noteworthy in his writing for Sri Lanka, however, is his downplaying of the esoteric side of theosophy that he so keenly promoted after leaving Sri Lanka, in favour of an exoteric path of self-help.

The Buddha: adept or enlightened being?

Sinnett in his book, *Esoteric Buddhism*, presented the Buddha as an 'adept', an enlightened human spirit who had consciously chosen rebirth as Gotama to reform popular morality and teach the science of adeptship (Sinnett 1903: 174–82). In Sinnett's intricate system, influenced by Blavatsky, Gotama was fourth in a series of 7 Buddhas, teachers of the 7 races within the human evolutionary journey around the planetary system. He claimed further that the Buddha did not pass into *nibbāna* at death but revisited earth in two further incarnations, first as Śaṅkarācārya in India and second as TsongKhapa in Tibet. In both incarnations, Sinnett confidently claimed, his aim was to teach esoteric science to the adept, first to Hindus and then to Buddhists (Sinnett 1903: 183–91). Sinnett's Buddha thus affirmed the theosophical belief that all religions were one at the esoteric level.

Leadbeater promoted a similar esoteric evolutionary paradigm. It hung on ten Great Initiations, which he described in terms appropriated from both Buddhism and Christianity. The fourth initiation, for instance, was that of the *Arahat*. At the seventh initiation stood three principal world-governing officers, including the *Bodhisattva*. The Buddha entered at the eighth level. Above him was the Lord of the World and then, at the tenth level, the Trinity of the Logos.

In Sri Lanka, however, Leadbeater did not privilege this panorama. Sri Lankan Buddhists probably had no idea that Leadbeater preferred to use vocabulary taken from Christianity to describe the ultimate or that the Buddha had a subordinate place in his esoteric cosmic panorama. In *TB* he refers to the Buddha reverentially as, 'Our Blessed Lord' or 'Our dear Lord'. The *Smaller Buddhist Catechism*

presents the Buddha as omniscient, a claim that brought Leadbeater into contemporary Buddhist – Christian debate (Leadbeater 1889a: 3, Part 1 Q. 3).[8] Questions 28 and 29 of Part One of this Catechism then yield:

Q: Ought we not to love Him because He found out for us the cause of sorrow?
A: Yes, we ought to love and revere Him with all our hearts.
Q: How can we best show our love?
A: By following the doctrines which He taught.

(Leadbeater 1889a: 6)

Although love for the Buddha is stressed here, the words also contain a masked attack on ritual and the Buddha as living presence. It is not through temple devotions that love for the Buddha is shown, Leadbeater preached, but through following a moral, exoteric path. The Buddha is teacher and guide, preacher of the Law.

What the Buddha taught: an activist path of own power

> Where man is, there is the present master of life. His forces come up from the centre, and come down from the sky. All gospels lie in him. From his two hands all tools are born, all arts proceed. The world becomes his shadow to chase his footsteps…His gestures rise into religion, and his heart heaves with the hope of the universe.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889b: 290)

Cosmic Law, rooted in *Kamma*, and 'own power', self-effort, lay at the heart of the exoteric Buddhism that Leadbeater voiced in Sri Lanka. This is what he and other theosophists presented as more just and rational than the Christian concepts of God and human sinfulness.[9] They are succinctly expressed in eight points put forward by Leadbeater as ones that Buddhists need have no doubt about:

> That our LORD BUDDHA is entirely competent as a Teacher and Guide on the Path to NIRVANA: That His DHARMA or LAW contains a system of rules which will enable us to reach NIRVANA; That the method of life appointed for His SANGHA or Priesthood is on the whole the most favourable to the rapid attainment of NIRVANA; That the method of the Four Paths of Holiness (in which the Ten Sanyojana are one by one cast off) is the only one by which true happiness can be attained; That we have had many previous births; That we shall have other births in the future; That there is an indestructible connection between all these births; That an inexorable law of cause and effect rules upon the spiritual as well as the physical planes.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889c: 242)

The view of *kamma* presented here accorded well with the theosophist belief that action and force could not be destroyed and therefore that every action would bear fruit in exact proportion to the action itself. *Kamma* was ‘an inexorable law of cause and effect’ ruling in the moral and spiritual plane, through which a person received the ‘exact result of his own deeds, whether good or bad’.[10]

Right thought, right speech and right livelihood, the moral core of the Eightfold Path, therefore, had scientific significance for Leadbeater. A person’s every word was irrevocable. Repentance was a waste of energy. The only repentance of value, according to Leadbeater, was ‘the firm resolve to amend’ (Leadbeater 1889j: 169). Nothing could cheat the working of the Law of *Kamma*, neither merit-making acts of generosity nor devotional practices.

On this point, Leadbeater was willing to criticize esoteric theosophy. He included in *TB* an article from the *Theosophist* called ‘The Two Paths’ and renamed it, ‘Will Exoteric Buddhism Do?’ It was aimed at, ‘that numerous Western “esoteric” company, which turns up the nose at “exoteric” Buddhism’ and argued that the path of moral effort would lead to sure spiritual progress, whereas only a few natures were fit for, ‘the precipitous path of occultism, through a series of initiations’ (Leadbeater 1889f: 243).

The theosophists’ interpretation of Buddhism did not privilege the Four Noble Truths, although the concept of wisdom or right knowledge was important to them. Yet, those who came to Sri Lanka appropriated the Truths as universal law in service of the exoteric moral path they sought to promote. In a series for *TB*, for instance, Leadbeater presented the first Truth as, ‘the penalty of violated Law, a penalty invoked by man himself’ through ignorance of the Third Truth (Leadbeater 1998d: 313). The task involved after realizing the Third Truth then became:

> to conquer the self, to root out from the heart all desire, all craving and lust for life or its so-called pleasures, to still the wild sweeps of passion that distract the sin-tossed waif of humanity; to be lord of self – the mystery of life solved – the mind serene and calm.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889d: 321)

Anicca and *anattā*: evolution rather than change

When it came to the concepts of *anicca* and *anattā*, the theosophists had more difficulty in reconciling Buddhism with their own convictions. Leadbeater’s Smaller Catechism states that the *arahat*, ‘fully understands the impermanency of all things’ (Leadbeater 1889a: 23; Part II, Q. 53). However, elsewhere, he claimed:

> One of the commonest expressions is that ‘times change’, which is at once a recognition of the fact that growth is normal, and an incorrect way of expressing a truth. We do not *change*; we *grow*; and, as we make

> the 'times', they change with us . . . Man must go onward and upward or deteriorate and disappear.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889e: 353)

Theosophists believed in directed change along an upward evolutionary path for the parts of the human person that they considered imperishable, rather than a general principle of impermanence. Sinnett and Blavatsky worked with a sevenfold classification of what made up the human person. The first three parts perished at death; the others were part of an evolutionary process that could speed up with esoteric help.[11] To define *anattā* as no-soul, therefore, was considered utter nonsense. And this was not hidden from Sri Lankans. In a long article serialized in *TB*, Sinnett claimed that the Buddha's reproof was for existence in the material world:

> No where will Buddhism be found to contemplate such extinction in *spiritual life* as a desirable result. The texts which are supposed to contemplate such extinction in NIRVANA have reference really to the enlargement of consciousness acquired by what we call the soul in the remote futurity of its spiritual evolution.
>
> (Sinnett 1889: 82)

Sinnett's argument was that the Buddha's rejection of the immutability of the consciousness in eternity had wrongly been interpreted as repudiation of the survival of the soul (Sinnett 1889: 146).

Although Leadbeater was willing to publish Sinnett in Sri Lanka, he and Olcott were not so outspoken. They either avoided *anattā* or gave it a new spin. Olcott, in a note in his catechism, wrote:

> The denial of 'Soul' by Buddha . . . points to the prevalent delusive belief in an independent personality; an entity, which after one birth would go to a fixed place or state where, as a perfect entity, it could eternally enjoy or suffer. And what he shows is that the 'I am I' consciousness, is as regards permanency, logically impossible, since its elementary constituents constantly change and the 'I' of one birth differs from the 'I' of every other birth. But every thing that I have found in Buddhism accords with the theory of a gradual evolution of the perfected man – *viz*, a Buddha – through numberless natal experiences.
>
> (Olcott 1881: 52–3; Note to Q. 232)

And Leadbeater's only reference to it in his Smaller Catechism was when he defined the first fetter, '*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*', as 'the delusion of self' (Leadbeater 1889a: 12, Part II, Q. 6).

The basic theosophical position was that, although the 'personality' was an impermanent fiction to be cast off at death, the 'individuality' was permanent, creating 'an indestructible connection' between births (Leadbeater 1889c: 242).

The delusion of Self, according to the theosophists, was therefore the delusion of 'personality'[12] not the denial of a soul.

Nibbāna – a positive goal

To define *nibbāna* as annihilation was anathema to the theosophists. It was a 'savage depreciation' that missed the 'beautiful spirituality' of Buddhism (Sinnett 1889: 153). *Nibbāna* for the theosophists was the goal of evolution, beyond the alternative states of heavenly bliss and physical existence, a supreme condition of holiness, 'in which the selfishness, the egotism, the delusive sense of separateness which kept down humanity to the conventional level would be "blown out" ' (Sinnett 1889: 146).

Leadbeater, in *The Smaller Buddhist Catechism*, explains *nibbāna* as, 'A state of happiness full of peace, which we are unable to understand' (Leadbeater 1889a: 8; Part I, Q. 57). However, when unrestricted by the scrutiny of revivalist monks – the catechism was endorsed by Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṃgala, – he preferred the concept of union with an absolute, infinite and universal reality, which he and other theosophists described in varying ways: the light of the Logos (Leadbeater 1889f: 243); the One Reality (Dawson 1889: 134); the Supreme consciousness (Sinnett 1889: 154); the All-Soul (Leuders 1889: 203). It was freedom from the Law:

> Life is a burden? Nay! burdens are there no longer. There is no life or death, for man is freed from the Law. Love, the creative power – true love – the divine – is evolved, and man's will, purified, strengthened and elevated, merges in the Universal.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889d: 321)

Concluding remarks

The theosophists who came to Sri Lanka saw Buddhism as that part of the East's wisdom best suited to aid their search for the spiritual truth at the heart of all religion. Whether they read this in esoteric terms or not, they usually opted to downplay the esoteric when in Sri Lanka in their zeal to encourage a 'pure', rational, exoteric Buddhism, rooted in right action, loving compassion and cosmic Law. Olcott came closer than other theosophists, with the exception of Frank Lee Woodward of the twentieth century, to making Buddhism his primary love, even seeking to create a movement that would unify Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yet, a rift emerged between him and key Sri Lankan revivalists and this was largely because he remained more theosophist than Buddhist and too locked into his antagonism to the 'superstitions' within Christianity to appreciate Buddhist devotional ritual.[13]

As this rift emerged between Olcott and some revivalists, the theosophist 'mission' as a whole lost some of its credibility. One accusation levelled at theosophists was that they had no faith (*saddhā*). Leadbeater knew this danger

and sought to reinvent Buddhist devotion drawing on the Christianity he had rejected.[14] But a person such as Charles Powell, who had rejected Christianity for its irrationality, although intended for the Christian clergy,[15] was defiant. In the lecture quoted at the head of this chapter, he declared:

> Buddhism requires no faith from its adherents, and makes no draft upon their credulity. It expressly states in the plainest manner that every man must use his own reason and accept only what that reason approves. On that declaration we take our stand, and we deny anybody's right to dictate what we shall believe. But we do with all our hearts and in all humility accept the Doctrine taught by our Blessed LORD.
>
> (Powell 1889: 331)

Another source of conflict was the right some theosophists seized to tell Sri Lankans what they should believe, seen, for instance, in the diatribe by P. Holly mentioned in Chapter 8 within Part III, which accused Sri Lankans of ignorance of their own religion (Holly 1889b). Finally, however much theosophists in Sri Lanka downplayed the esoteric, they could not prevent mixed messages slipping out: on the one hand, insistence on the rationality of Buddhism, and, on the other, a panorama of cosmic occult powers and reference to 'occultism'.[16] The Christian missionary assumption that they supported 'devil-worship' sprung from this.[17]

Theosophy, therefore, did not take hold in Sri Lanka. It was the Buddhist Theosophical Society not the Theosophical Society that survived. The former became a tool of the Revival; the latter could not. Although Olcott and Leadbeater tried to accede to the revivalist role given to them, Sri Lankans discovered that theosophy was not Buddhism. And the reaction against the theosophists, by some, was as virulent as their welcome had been effusive; they became the enemy of Buddhism, as dangerous as the Christian missionaries. The Anagārika Dharmapāla, for instance, student of Olcott, could write in a personal letter, when visiting London in 1926:

> Members of the Theosophical Society who follow Leadbeater and Mrs Besant are against Buddhism. They follow Jesus and he they say is greater than our Lord Buddha. Leadbeater and Mrs Besant steal everything from Buddhism and palm it off as their own and swindle the ignorant members of the Theosophical Society in England.[18]
>
> (Guruge 1965: 775)

However, for many ordinary Sri Lankans, Olcott particularly remained a hero. Frank Lee Woodward, in the early twentieth century, could describe a massive communal *dāna* to the monastic Sangha in Galle on Olcott Day (17 February, the day he died), with the words, 'The memory of Colonel Olcott is still green in Ceylon' (Woodward 1914: 17).

15

CONVERT TO COMPASSION

Allan Bennett

> His face was the most significant that I have ever seen. Twenty years of physical suffering had twisted and scored it: a lifetime of meditation upon universal love had imparted to it an expression that was unmistakable. His colour was almost dusky, and his eyes had the soft glow of dark amber . . . Above all, at the moment of meeting and always thereafter, I was conscious of a tender and far-shining emanation, an unvarying psychic sunlight, that environed his personality.
>
> (Bax 1968: 23)

This was Clifford Bax's impression of Allan Bennett (1872–1923) in 1918. Bennett was then a lay person, and he was sick, incapacitated by asthma for weeks at a time. But ten years earlier, as the venerable Ananda Metteyya, he had led the first Buddhist mission to England, from Myanmar. The Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland had been formed in preparation.

Allan Bennett's life, after his discovery of Buddhism, was inspired by the conviction that the West needed Buddhism and had only to understand its message to embrace it. He laid down a threefold agenda in the first edition of the journal he edited from Myanmar. First, he imagined a West that was losing both religious and moral awareness:

> Apart altogether from the misery that that civilization has spread in lands beyond its pale, can it be claimed that in its internal polity, that for its own peoples, it has brought with it any diminution of the world's suffering, any diminution of its degradation, its misery, its crime; above all, has it brought about any general increase of its native contentment, the extension of any such knowledge as promotes the spirit of mutual helpfulness rather than the curse of competition?
>
> (Bennett 1903a: 12)

'No', was his answer and he backed this up with reference to the West's 'crowded taverns', 'overflowing gaols', 'sad asylums' and its neglect of mental culture

(Bennett 1903a: 13). Second, he rejected three 'misconceptions' about Buddhism: that it was heathen and idolatrous; that it was connected with 'miracle-mongering and esotericism'; that it was 'a backboneless, apathetic, pessimistic manner of philosophy' (Bennett 1903a: 25). Third, he put across what he believed Buddhism to be: rational and optimistic. Later he would contest, in addition, two 'onlys': that Buddhism was only a rational philosophy; and that the Buddha was only a remarkable and enlightened teacher.

To this apologetic task, Allan Bennett brought a poetic imagination, a scientific mind and a deep concern for justice and peace. And in Allan Bennett, compassion moves centre stage as Buddhism's sine qua non.

Bennett's life

In piecing together the biography of Allan Bennett, I am heavily indebted to the writings of two of his closest friends, Aleister Crowley and Dr Cassius Pereira.[1] Bennett was born in London. His father, a civil and electrical engineer, died when he was young. Pereira claimed he was adopted by a Mr McGregor and kept this name until McGregor died, a fact repeated to me by the venerable Balangoda Ananda Metteyya (Harris 1998: 4). Yet, it is possible that his mother was still in contact, since Crowley refers to him being brought up by his mother as a strict Catholic (Symonds and Grant 1989: 180). This might explain his later opposition to any form of religion that placed more importance on 'sin' than love. After an education in Bath, he trained as an analytical chemist and was eventually employed by a Dr Bernard Dyer, a public analyst and consulting chemist then based in London (Grant 1972: 82).

The limited information available suggests that Bennett was a sensitive and serious young man, who became alienated from Christianity both because it seemed incompatible with science, and because he could not reconcile the concept of a God of love with the suffering he saw and experienced. The asthma that plagued his life seems to have begun in childhood. It prevented him from holding down a permanent job, meaning that he was at times desperately poor and ill. 'Allan never knew joy,' Crowley wrote, 'he disdained and distrusted pleasure from the womb' (Symonds and Grant 1989: 234).

Bennett did not, however, distrust the search for truth and goodness. And his two keys to this were science and religion. His religious quest was experimental, even daring. After rejecting Roman Catholicism, he turned first to Asia. At the age of 18, *The Light of Asia* influenced him, but it was part of a larger exploration that embraced Hindu literature, yogic forms of breath control and meditation (Grant 1972: 85; Symonds and Grant 1989: 246–7) and eventually Western esoteric mysticism.

In 1894, Bennett joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1889 by William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, taking the name *Iehi Aour*, Hebrew for 'let there be light'. He rose to the top rapidly, known for his psychic powers.[2] Most of the available information about Bennett

at this point comes through Crowley, who joined the Order in 1898. He speaks of Bennett as tall but stooped because of illness, with ‘a shock of wild, black hair’ and a noble head, adding, ‘I did not fully realize the colossal stature of that sacred spirit; but I was instantly aware that this man could teach me more in a month than anyone else in five years’ (Symonds and Grant 1989: 181).

The next stage in Bennett’s life began when he travelled to Sri Lanka in 1900 for health reasons, Crowley paying his passage in the hope that this would save his life and spread Western esotericism in the East. But Bennett was more interested in exploring the local, learning yoga, for instance, from P. Ramanathan, the Solicitor-General.[3] According to Pereira, he also went to Kamburugamuwa and studied Pāli under an elder Sinhala monk. By the end of six months, Pereira claimed, he could converse in it fluently, adding, ‘Such was the brilliance of his intellect’ (Pereira 1923: 6).

Sri Lanka was a turning point for Bennett. His asthma improved. He gave up the cycle of drugs he had found necessary in England.[4] Most of all, he found the answer to his religious quest in Theravāda Buddhism, rejecting his former eclectic experimentation with psychic and esoteric power (Symonds and Grant 1989: 237, 249). By the time he addressed the Hope Lodge of the Theosophical Society, Colombo, in July 1901, he had probably decided that he would become a Buddhist monk.

Bennett was ordained a novice in Akyab, Arakan, Myanmar on 12 December 1901, taking the name Ananda Maitreya, which he later changed to the Pāli, Metteyya. Higher ordination followed on 21 May 1902, under the venerable Sheve Bya Sayadaw. When Crowley next visited Myanmar, he was in a monastery just outside Rangoon. From there, on 13 March 1903, he inaugurated the *Buddhasāsana Samāgama*, an international Buddhist society that aimed at the global networking of Buddhists.[5] It soon had official representatives in Austria, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, China, Germany, Italy, America and England. In the same year, he launched *Buddhism – An Illustrated Quarterly Review*, which, by 1904, was being sent free to between 500 and 600 libraries in Europe.[6]

The first Buddhist mission to England

Ananda Metteyya arrived in England on 23 April 1908 to an eager welcome from the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, formed the previous November. He remained until 2 October, ‘the time allotted to the Mission,’ according to Christmas Humphreys (Humphreys 1968: 7). Although Ananda Metteyya told a Rangoon paper that he was highly gratified with the visit, it was a qualified success. On the positive side there was his grace and dignity, his ‘pleasing voice and beautiful enunciation’ (Humphreys 1968: 6), his knowledge of Buddhism, the scholars he gathered around him through ‘correspondence and constant interviews’ (Humphreys 1968: 6) and his engaging manner in private conversation (Humphreys 1972: 133). Yet, ensuring he could follow his monastic discipline stretched his supporters to the limit (Bell 2000). His orange robes in the streets caused laughter, and his public speaking style was uncharismatic, since he would

avoid eye contact, keeping his eye on a prepared script. Nevertheless, the Buddhist Society's journal, *The Buddhist Review* (*BR*), could say in 1909 that he left behind him, 'golden opinions and the friendship and respect of all who had the privilege of meeting him'.[7]

Ananda Metteyya hoped he would return to England within three years to establish a permanent Buddhist community in the West. The hope died. One reason for this was his health, which failed rapidly on his return to Myanmar. Pereira records that he underwent two operations and reluctantly agreed to leave the Order on medical advice (Pereira 1923: 6).[8] In 1914, Burmese friends sent him to England where he intended to sail from Liverpool to America to stay with his sister, but the ship's doctor refused him passage.

From this point onwards, Allan Bennett's story was a sad one. A doctor who was a member of the Liverpool Branch of the Buddhist Society took him in, but the financial and emotional burden of this proved too great. In 1916, an anonymous group of well-wishers appealed for money through the Buddhist Society to save Bennett from being placed 'in some institution supported by public charity'.[9]

Help came, from overseas as well as Britain, and Bennett's health rallied. In the winter of 1917–1918, he gave a series of papers to a private audience in Clifford Bax's studio. Then, on Vesak Day (May) 1918, Bennett gave to the Buddhist Society what Christmas Humphreys called 'a "fighting speech" which aroused the listening members to fresh enthusiasm' (Humphreys 1968: 14).

According to one account, Bennett moved to London in 1920 (Mullen 1989: 92). Although he was incapacitated for weeks at a time, he took over the editorship of the *BR* from the Sri Lankan scholar, D.B. Jayatileka. The January 1922 edition was the last he edited and indeed the last that was published. He died on 9 March 1923. A Buddhist funeral service was prepared by Francis Payne, a prominent Buddhist convert from the 1908 mission.[10]

I will use three main sources to explore Ananda Metteyya/Allan Bennett's representation of Buddhism. *The Religion of Burma and other Papers* published by the Theosophical Publishing House of India in 1929 contains talks given in Myanmar, belonging to the first decade of the twentieth century. *The Wisdom of the Aryas*, published in London in 1923, the year of his death, consists of the lectures delivered in 1917–1918 plus one additional paper on rebirth. Finally, his writing in the journal *Buddhism* is most important.

A suffering world

Ananda Metteyya's understanding of Buddhism began with awareness of suffering (*dukkha*). Speaking of the progression of thought in one who attempted to look at the world with 'the cold, clear light of Reason', he wrote:

> Firstly, he sees Life, – the interminable waves of Life's great Ocean all around him; the pulsing, breathing, gleaming waters of the Sea of Being; and, at first thought and sight of this, he thinks: this Life is Joy.

> He lives. Living, he learns. Learning, he presently comes to know – for Learning is Suffering, and Suffering is Life. He sees beneath this so fair-seeming face of Nature lies everywhere corruption. Behind all this thrilling, hoping life, reigns Death; certain, inevitable, and by all life abhorred . . . He looks deeper into life, hoping that thus he may find the secret of happiness . . . Learning more, he sees that this Nature is a battle-field.
>
> He sees each living creature fighting for its life, Self against the Universe . . . He sees at last how all this life is a cheat, a snare, – so long as you look at it from this standpoint of the individual. If he had had faith in God, – in some great Being who had devised the Universe, he can no longer hold it; for any being, now he clearly sees, who could have devised a Universe wherein which was all this wanton war, this piteous mass of pain coterminous with life, must have been a Demon, not a God.
>
> (Bennett 1908a: 183–4)

Ananda Metteyya's conclusion was that it was sacrifice that pervaded existence, not joy. His phrases were vivid: 'Life ever offered up to Life on its own altar' (Bennett 1923: 3); nature as 'a slaughter-house wherein no thought of pity ever enters' (Bennett 1929: 156); 'Life alone can feed life' (Bennett 1929: 170). And in 'the Vast Emptiness' of the cosmos there was a, 'a horror of living past conceiving, full of the Pain of Being, darkened by Not-Understanding; thrilling with Hope in youth, and ever aging in Despair!' (Bennett 1929: 142–3).

Part of Buddhism's attraction for Ananda Metteyya was that it looked the truth of suffering in the eye (Bennett 1923: xiv). 'To dare to look on life as it really is' was the first step along the religious path (Bennett 1929: 221). It was into this suffering world that the Buddha came as liberator.

The Buddha

At a time when most Westerners were stressing the humanity and historicity of the Buddha, Ananda Metteyya was pointing out that no comparison with ordinary humanity was possible:

> but his Buddhahood consists not in His humanity, but rather in the fact that, through lives of incredible effort and endurance, He has attained to a spiritual evolution which renders Him as different from a human being as the Sun is different from one of its servient planets; which makes of Him, His personality whilst it endures; His teaching, after that personality has passed away; a focal centre of spiritual power no less mighty in its sphere than that of the Sun in the material realm.
>
> (Bennett 1923: 111)

It was compassionate self-sacrifice in innumerable lives preceding Buddhahood that qualified the Buddha for this, according to Ananda Metteyya, a sacrifice,

'so great, so utterly beyond our ken, that we can only try to dimly represent it in terms of human life and thought and action' (Bennett 1923: 16–17).

Acts of devotion to the Buddha, therefore, did not seem unnatural or irrational to Ananda Metteyya, and in this he knew he differed from some Western Buddhists (Bennett 1929: 341–2). When, in Myanmar, he came across an atmosphere of worship so intense that the air seemed to vibrate with a 'palpable' potency, an 'immediate' presence (Bennett 1923: 7), his reaction was not disdain but wonder. His disdain was for those who denied that the Buddha could be present in the lives of the people:

> There, into the daily lives, the very speech and household customs of the common folk, this ever-present sun-light of the Teaching penetrated; there, hearing at a fiesta the gathered crowds take refuge in the Buddha, you could all but see them turn their faces to bathe them in the splendour of His very presence – till one could understand how, instead of getting angry when they hear the Christian missionaries tell them they are taking refuge in a Being whom their own religion tells them has passed utterly away, they always answer, as they do answer, only with a wise and a compassionate smile.
>
> (Bennett 1923: 6)

The devotion of dependence and blind faith, however, he did criticize, as something akin to childhood. It could lead to heavenly rebirth but not to the ultimate goal (Bennett 1929: 370). There was a higher devotion connected with questioning, investigation and recognition: 'the devotion that comes in the train of Understanding' . . . 'when we attain some glimpse of the tremendous meaning of the Love that has for us resulted in the knowledge of the Law we have' (Bennett 1929: 320). Yet, ultimately:

> The true worship of the Buddhas is not even in divinest-seeming outer offering or praise; rightly that one shall be called a follower of The Buddha, rightly will he merit the name of Buddhist, who walks the Way The Buddha found; that is, the Way, that He, the Master of Compassion, walked first Himself, twenty-five centuries ago in India.
>
> (Bennett 1929: 320)

What the Buddha taught

Ananda Metteyya would have agreed with the theosophists that the key to the Buddhist view of the world, as taught by the Buddha, was Law, as shown in the Law of cause and effect (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). But he did not see this as the exoteric component of an esoteric vision, but as making the need for the esoteric, obsolete. With the Law of Cause and Effect as shown in the Four Noble Truths (Bennett 1929: 320, 356), the need for esoteric knowledge, the goal of his youthful experimentation, was wiped out.

Ananda Metteyya could graphically describe *dukkha*, the First Noble Truth. His representation of the cause of *dukkha* varied. Sometimes he stressed *taṇhā*, craving, and appealed to science. Take the amoebae, he suggested, and *dukkha* can be seen. Amoebae move only when irritated, when feeling aversion. When still, they are at peace. From this, he continued, all other animal reactions have developed. By the time human aversion is reached, a thousand complex suffering-creating cravings have arisen. Yet, he preferred to cite *avijjā*, 'ignorance', rather than *taṇhā*, most particularly ignorance of *anattā*, non-self.

Without knowledge of Buddhist ideas, he wrote, it is almost impossible to become aware 'how much every mode of expression of western thought involves the assumption of the existence of a Self' (Bennett 1908b: 279). The would-be Buddhist, therefore, had to learn:

> Life, so far as it is individualised, enselfed, ensouled is – even as the Reason teaches – evil, coterminous with Pain . . . Give up all hope, all faith in Self . . . Dream no more 'I am' or 'I shall be' but realise, Life suffers; and only by destruction of life's cause in Selfhood can that suffering be relieved, and Life pass nearer to the Other Shore.
>
> (Bennett 1908a: 186–7)

There are echoes of Arnold and Rhys Davids here, but Ananda Metteyya went further. The message of the Buddha, he believed, was that *dukkha* was inseparably linked with belief in self. The realization of the falsity of the soul concept was, 'the darkest hour in all the evolution of a man'. But it was 'the darkest hour which goes before the dawn' (Bennett 1904a: 369–70).

Undergirding this in Ananda Metteyya's vision was cosmic interconnectedness, raised to the status of scientific truth. All life was one. There was 'One Life'. The simile he most frequently used was of a wave:

> Just as all the waters of the ocean are *one water*, and one body of water, so it is with this universal teeming life; and just as, in the great ocean, there is, and can be by the very nature of it, no individual body of water separate from the rest, so in life's ocean there is – and can be by the very nature of it – no single separate unit or body of life, whether it be the highest or the lowest, most subtle or most gross . . . Each *satta* – each living being that our Nescience makes us regard as an individual, a real and separate entity, a self or soul or Atma – is in truth only one such wave, whether a billow or a ripple only, upon the surface of life's ocean.
>
> (Bennett 1904a: 165–7)

Arnold had stressed the interdependence of all. Ananda Metteyya again took the imagery further. All animal and plant life was so fused together that every action, movement or thought affected the whole, rendering meaningless any distinction

between good for self and good for others. Non-recognition of this was the main cause of suffering.

When the sense of self was blown out, when the 'One Life' was recognized, according to Ananda Metteyya's reading of the Buddha's teaching, something 'immeasurable and indescribable' was released, taking the place of self (Bax 1968: 26–7). Ananda Metteyya sought continually to define this 'something'. He sometimes appealed to non-possessive love, but more often to compassion or pity, rooted in the realization:

> that we ourselves are but as transitory waves upon the Ocean of existence, – that all the good we do, the love we have, the wisdom that we garner and the help we give is wrought but for the reaping of the Universe, wrought because Pity is the highest Law of Life, – this is in Buddhism accounted the true beginning of all righteousness, – unselfishness that gives all, whilst knowing yet that it shall never reap the gain.
>
> (Bennett 1904a: 363)

Compassion was the highest point in human evolution for Ananda Metteyya and it led to a missionary commitment to spread a more humane ethic:

> Understanding how all of it is *doomed to sorrow* – wrought of the very warp and woof of Pain and Suffering and Despair – let the divine emotion of Compassion that wakes in us at the thought of it kill out all Hatred from our hearts and ways. Seeing . . . how *Life is One* . . . let us live no more for self's fell phantasy, but for the All . . . let us live so that the All, the One, may be the nobler and the greater for our life.
>
> (Bennett 1929: 177)

Within the writers I have covered, Ananda Metteyya was the first, as far as I know, to use the phrase, 'One Life'. But he was not the first Westerner in Myanmar to do so. A civil servant with an empathic understanding of Buddhism similar to Dickson's, H. Fielding Hall, had used the term in 1898, claiming he had drawn from oral data (Fielding Hall 1906: 250). And Frank Woodward would use it after him, from Sri Lanka (Woodward 1914: 48).

Morality and meditation

Two distinct lines of teaching are present in Ananda Metteyya's work about how to begin the Buddhist path: act with generosity and it will affect your mind; work on your mind through meditation and it will affect both your mind and your action. He was aware that many Buddhists in Myanmar were generous simply to gain a better rebirth. He did not condemn this, but claimed that the action itself could modify the motivation, by widening, 'the petty limits of man's selfhood' (Bennett 1929: 65). In other words, the *Dhamma* could teach that, 'like a flame of fire, Love kindles Love, grows by the mere act of loving' (Bennett 1929: 66).

If action could be mind-changing, Ananda Metteyya insisted that meditation could be action-changing and that it was essential, even at the beginning of the path. *Sīla* (morality) and *dāna* (generosity)[11] were not enough alone (Bennett 1929: 327). Only meditation could give insight into the how and why of the mind and heart, enabling a person to change the constitution of his being through the power of the 'mental element' (Bennett 1908b: 284).

Ananda Metteyya's response to Westerners who branded meditation as selfish was simply that 'from the Buddhist view-point, all reformation, all attempt to help on life, can best be effected by first reforming the immediate life-kingdom of the "self"' (Bennett 1929: 232). In other words, if you wanted to help the whole world, there was no better place to start than with the self: 'Each thought of love, each effort after purity man makes or thinks is gain to all' (Bennett 1903a: 22). But it had to be the right kind of meditation. If it served only to magnify the 'I', it could be worse than the absence of meditation (Bennett 1929: 407–8).

One practice that Ananda Metteyya recommended as action-changing at the beginning of the path was meditation on a *brahmavihāra* (divine abiding) or an attribute of existence. Meditation on compassion, the second *brahmavihāra*, for instance, could, he believed, open up a path with 'power to help relieve the sorrow of the world' (Bennett 1929: 329–30).

Right 'watchfulness' or 'recollectedness', the translation he gave of *sati*, more frequently translated as mindfulness, was a further practice Ananda Metteyya recommended to all, including beginners. He defined it as the observation and classification of thought, speech and action and '*the constant application to each and all of them of the Doctrine of Selflessness*' with the thought, '*This is not I, this is not Mine, there is no Self herein*' (Bennett 1929: 87).[12] This meticulous discipline, Ananda Metteyya taught, could lead to *samādhi*, which he judged a higher form of meditation that could bring sudden insight.

Ananda Metteyya could find no adequate English translation for the word *samādhi*, usually defined as concentration, preferring the word 'ecstacy'. He linked it with non-dual insight into the 'One Life'. Usually the mind is like a flickering flame, he explained, oscillating continually between consciousness and unconsciousness. In *samādhi* the flame burns steadily and, 'the true understanding of the Oneness of Life that makes for Peace, can be won' (Bennett 1929: 393).

Ananda Metteyya rarely mentioned the *jhāna*, meditative absorptions. But his writings contain one intense description of an experience that he links with entering the first, although its quality speaks more of the attainment of stream-entry (*sotāpatti*), the first of four traditional supermundane paths in Theravāda Buddhism. Meditation on compassion came first and then, a burst of liberating consciousness:

> As from the heart of a dark thundercloud at night time when nought or but a little of earth or heaven can be seen, suddenly the lightning flashes, and for an instant the unseen world gleams forth in instantaneous light, light penetrating every darkest corner, flushing the clouded sky with momentary

> glory – so then, at that great moment, will come the realisation of all our toil. No words, no similes, no highest thought of ours can adequately convey that mighty realisation; but then, at that time, we shall know and see; we shall realise that all our life has changed of a sudden, and what of yore we deemed Compassion – what of old we deemed the utmost attainment that the mind or the life of man can compass – that is ours at last; we have won, achieved, and entered into the Path of which mere words can never tell.
>
> (Bennett 1929: 333–4)

Ananda Metteyya did not stress *upekkhā*, equanimity, the quality normally linked with the third and fourth *jhāna*. Yet, there is one interesting definition of it, possibly directed at those who linked the term with apathy: ‘Discrimination or Aloofness from the worldly life’ (Bennett 1923: 104).

Nibbāna – inalienable peace

Lying in creative tension within Ananda Metteyya’s work were two images: *nibbāna* as near and attainable; *nibbāna* as distant and indescribable. When new to monastic life, in Myanmar, it was as though he could turn the page of *anicca, dukkha*, *anattā* and find *nibbāna* lying on the other side (Bennett 1929: 174). He wrote down his thoughts on it in the first issue of *Buddhism* (Bennett 1903b). ‘Peace’ was the word he used most frequently at this point to describe it, a peace linked with the death of the ‘I’. ‘It grows but from the ashes of the self outburnt’ (Bennett 1929: 48) he graphically wrote. And those who would equate it with the nihilistic he vehemently challenged:

> If I am asked, ‘Is the Nibbāna Annihilation? Is it Cessation? Is it the End of All?’ I reply, thus even have we learned. It is Annihilation – the annihilation of the threefold fatal fire of Passion, Wrath and Ignorance. It is Annihilation – the annihilation of conditioned being, of all that has bound and fettered us; the Cessation of the dire delusion of life that has veiled from us the splendour of the Light Beyond. It is the End of All – the end of the long tortuous pilgrimage through worlds of interminable illusion; the End of Sorrow, of Impermanence, of Self-deceit. From the torment of the sad Dream of Life an everlasting Awakening, – from the torture of selfhood an eternal Liberation; – a Being, an Existence, that to name Life were sacrilege, and to name Death a lie: – unnameable, unthinkable, yet even in this life to be realised and entered into.
>
> (Bennett 1903b: 133)

In 1917, as war raged, however, he was less euphoric:

> Nirvana stands for the Ultimate, the Beyond, and the Goal of Life – a State so utterly different from this conditioned ever-changing being of

> the Self-dream that we know as to lie not only quite Beyond all naming and describing; but far past even Thought itself.
>
> (Bennett 1923: 124)

Yet, in the same talk, he could add that it lay 'nearer to us than our nearest consciousness; even as, to him who rightly understands, it is dearer than the dearest hope that we can frame' (Bennett 1923: 125). Struggling to explain it to Clifford Bax, though, he drew on atomic science: what happened at arahantship could be similar to atomic disintegration. Forces that had been bound together were separated and transformed into something completely different (Bax 1968: 28).

The danger of science and rationalism

As a young monk, Ananda Metteyya saw Buddhism and science walking hand in hand to bring hope to the West. Before 1914, he could claim that the knowledge science fostered would pave the way to 'a grander and more stable civilization than ever the world has known' through 'the true comprehension of the nature of life and thought and hence of the universe in which we live' (Bennett 1904b: 533). It would be a 'New Civilisation' in which 'unerring Reason' would be substituted for 'the transitory dreams of the emotions' (Bennett 1904b: 540).

Reason, he believed, could lead to an appreciation of Truth that would humanize society and break war-generating hatred. He was also convinced that only time was needed for science to uncover the material and psychic secrets of the universe.

Lying behind this hope was an evolutionary theory, not the kind favoured by the theosophists, but a corporate form. He imagined it as a movement from childhood to adulthood with two trajectories: one connected with compassion and the other with wisdom. Within the first, the stage of 'childhood' was when good was done from fear of punishment. Adolescence came when the motivation changed to the selfishness that saw the fruit of good deeds. The stage of adulthood was when good was done with no expectation of reward (Bennett 1905: 3). Within the second, childhood was when moral imperatives were accepted without question as the dictates of a hypothetical supreme being. Adolescence was the age of investigation and questioning, and adulthood the age of understanding.

When Ananda Metteyya looked at the West from Myanmar before 1908, he saw the age of investigation. He saw reason beginning to triumph over an ontology based on unquestioning faith, the mark of childhood. He was willing to praise the Western mind for its 'incomparable achievements' in science (Bennett 1929: 253) and looked forward to an age of understanding, as science and Buddhism joined hands. Never did he slip into the 'trope of the child', as identified by postcolonial writers such as Sugirtharajah: the tendency of orientalists to locate the East in a pre-enlightenment, innocent state of childhood (Sugirtharajah 2003: 31–2, 67–9). It was the West that was emerging from a state of childhood.

The First World War changed this. Ananda Metteya's belief that the West could be reaching adolescence through severing itself from blind faith was destroyed.

So, in 1920, as Allan Bennett, he lamented that scientific advance had not been accompanied by 'improvement in matters of morality and self-restraint' and added,

> For stability, it is essential that every advance in the conquest over nature should be accompanied by an equal advance in the conquest over *self*; – over the spirits of greed and passion and ambition, which have brought this late calamity upon our Western world.
>
> (Bennett 1920b: 3)

In spite of this, the final writings of Allan Bennett were optimistic. He stood before the Buddhist Society on Vesak Day, 1918, while the war still raged, and admitted that force seemed to be triumphing over reason, hate over truth and love, and heartless greed over charity (Bennett 1920a: 141–2). He recounted the Buddhist narrative of the Sakyans' willingness to be destroyed rather than fight, and suggested that Britain should have followed that path in 1914 (Bennett 1920a: 142) in stark contrast to words uttered in 1904.[13] Yet, he also exhorted everyone to have faith that 'the Good' would conquer in the end, and to hold fast to cultivating the 'Heart's Kingdom' where truth and compassion lay. He concluded:

> When, then, the dark clouds of the sad world's dreaming gather thick around us . . . when the vast agony of life about us grips our hearts well-nigh to suffocation; even when death itself draws near; in each and every bitter circumstance of life we can find solace and new inspiration in the Law our Master left . . . And so, remembering, remembering how that great hope came to us; how He that won it was no God, but one just like ourselves, who suffered through life after life, yet ever strove to find a Way that all might follow to the Light Beyond all Life.
>
> (Bennett 1920a: 147–8)

After the war, he urged Buddhists in Britain to move outwards. One thing the war had done, he believed, was to shake people out of apathy and materialism. Therefore, in 1920, he could write, '*no period could possibly be more propitious to the fulfilment of our aims than that upon which we have entered*' – the aim of building Buddhism up in Britain (Bennett 1920b: 181).[14]

Concluding thoughts

A progression can be seen in Allan Bennett/Ananda Metteyya's thought. In his early years as a monk, science, reason and the *Dhamma* seemed to offer joint hope to the world. In his later years, he realised that it was not scientific advance that would pave the way for Buddhism's success in the West but the experience of *dukkha*, suffering. So, eventually, it was the religious life of Myanmar, not the scientific laboratory, that gave Ananda Metteyya his primary inspiration. In his

1917 lectures, the contrasts he wove between the brightness and intensity of Buddhist faith in Myanmar, and the greyness of wartime England were aimed at the heart rather than the intellect, at experience rather than rational argument. 'Till I went out to the East', he declared, 'I did not know what it was to experience the awakening to the Buddhist light of day' (Bennett 1923: 5). In the West, he added, one cannot find religion as such 'a vivid, potent, living force' as in the East (Bennett 1923: ix):

> For you must understand that this is no mere cut-and-dried philosophy – as it may seem to one who reads of it out here in books – but a living, breathing Truth; a mighty power able to sweep whomsoever casts himself wholeheartedly into its great streams, far and beyond the life we know and live.
>
> (Bennett 1923: 7)

The intensity of this awareness sometimes made the *Dhamma* appear to him as a bright, almost tangible, external force leading human effort onwards. There is a remarkable passage from his 1917 talks in which the Buddha and the *Dhamma* are seen as the source of regenerating power. Echoing Edwin Arnold, Allan Bennett stressed that there was a power 'whereby we may enfranchise that droplet of Life's ocean which we term ourselves', a power that moved to good and manifested itself as sympathy and compassion. He located it in the Buddha and the *Dhamma*, and claimed that it 'constitutes that force whereby we are ever, so to speak, drawn upwards out of this life in which we live, towards the State Beyond – Nirvana, the Goal towards which all Life is slowly but surely moving' (Bennett 1923: 119).

Part IV

REMODELLING BUDDHIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE

The dynamics of Protestant Buddhism

16

THE BRITISH AS WITNESSES TO THE TRADITION

Continuity and ruption

As the twentieth century opened, there were two main 'camps' of British specialists in Sri Lankan Buddhism: the missionaries and their associates, who stressed the nihilism of Buddhism's doctrine and the prevalence of 'spirit religion' and those such as Rhys Davids, who privileged the positive, stressing Buddhism's rationalism and its challenge to self-seeking individualism. Within both, there were some who looked primarily to the texts and some who preferred to appeal to Buddhism in practice. Each approach was fine tuned through awareness of the other. In addition to these there were theosophist perspectives, esoteric and exoteric, akin to the positive approach but fundamentally different in key areas, and there was the poetic passion of Allan Bennett.

Among these, it was the missionaries who were most aware that a construction of Buddhism had arisen in Asia and the West during the nineteenth century that was very different from Buddhism as traditionally practised. Contemporary scholarship has appropriated this, variously calling the 'new' Buddhism, Buddhist Modernism,[1] Protestant Buddhism (Obeyesekere 1970: 46–7) or Reformed Buddhism. More contested is how this construction of Buddhism arose. Was it simply due to the transference of an already present austere and 'Protestant' monastic doctrinal tradition to the laity?[2] Was it a construction so different from anything Asia had known that its initiators could only be Westerners such as Olcott and Rhys Davids?[3] Had, for instance, the practice of meditation 'entirely died out' in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand before the activities of the Western-influenced Anagārika Dharmapāla, as Allen robustly declares? (Allen 2002: 255). Or was the 'new' Buddhism an indigenous development with agency firmly in the Sri Lankan court, as scholars such as Malalgoda have argued?[4]

In this chapter I align myself with Malalgoda, Hallisey, Clarke and Blackburn in their insistence that the agency of Sri Lankan Buddhists must not be overlooked (Hallisey 1995; Clarke 1997; Blackburn 2002a,b). I will argue that the Buddhism that had emerged by the end of the nineteenth century was neither the creation of the West nor the East, but had developed through the interpenetration of the two, at a particular historical moment. I predicate this on the assertion that multiple witnesses to Buddhism existed within the Sri Lankan tradition before British colonialism, creating the potential for new, indigenous developments, and

creative, proactive engagement with Western influences. Sri Lankans were not simply the 'informants' of Western orientalists; nor were they mere ciphers for Western needs or mimics of Western practices. They were agents, acting albeit within the stifling power relationships of imperialism. And the new configuration of Buddhism that resulted did not mean existing practices were eclipsed or that the 'modernists' were completely united. Multiple witnesses to Buddhism continued.

That Buddhist modernism was neither the sole creation of the West nor the East, can be illustrated, I believe, by the judicious use of the British writers in this study, many of whom interacted with Sri Lankan Buddhists. Their representations of Buddhism did not arise in an empty space, drip-fed by Western orientalist translations of the texts. They had a referent on the ground. Whether it was Clough and Harvard spending hours with the monastic Sangha or Childers corresponding enthusiastically with Vaskaḍuvē Subhūti, or Dickson watching a *Pātimokkha* recital, the British were in dialogue, to use a contemporary but rather anachronistic term. They did not always 'hear' what was said to them. The 'maps' they consequently made of Buddhism were partial, conditioned by where they placed their attention.[5] That a doctrine was not mentioned by them did not mean that it was not present in the tradition. Nevertheless, what they wrote, if cautiously used, provides valuable data about Sri Lankan Buddhism, data that can help chart developments in the nineteenth century and answer the key question of this section: when did modernist emphases start to appear and where did they come from?

To begin my exploration, I will survey how the British representation of some key Buddhist themes developed during the century. I will then ask whether we can learn anything from this about the presence within, or the entry into, Buddhism, of 'modernist' or 'Protestant' emphases. Lastly, I will look at source material written by Sri Lankans, utilized by the British, that problematizes theories that link Buddhist modernism solely with Western needs and orientalist scholarship.

Continuity and discontinuity in British writing

The Buddha

The main movement in British writing is away from locating the Buddha in the mythological realm and towards affirming his historicity and humanity, and away from locating him within a series of Buddhas, equally endowed with Buddhahood, and towards presenting him as a single, remarkable human. Some writers of the early decades stress that Buddhists believe there have been many Buddhas, of whom Gotama was the last, and that Gotama himself underwent numerous preparatory lives before Buddhahood. Some claim the Buddha was a divinity, some that he was a man who was divinized. Others merge the two. Biographical accounts are usually peppered with the miraculous. At this stage in the century, the figure of the Buddha is not rooted in history but in narratives that

suggest the mythological. Harvard and Joinville are exceptions to this, Harvard in his suggestion that the Buddha was a reformer and Joinville in his defiant declaration that he would consider the Buddha a man. Davy also uses 'reformer' vocabulary: a Buddha comes 'to reform mankind' (Davy 1821: 205).

In the middle years, the Buddha as one of a series continues to be emphasized, some using the '*avatāra*' vocabulary of Hinduism, suggesting more transference from orientalist discourse in India than in earlier decades. Whether Gotama was man first or divinity first, remains important. At the same time, there is a more obvious attempt to distinguish between the historical and the mythological. Binning is one example but the tendency can be seen most strongly in Gogerly, Forbes and Knighton, who mercilessly de-mythologize the Buddha biography. Gogerly draws on the *Tipiṭaka*. Knighton, followed later by Spence Hardy, uses his imagination to evoke what could actually have happened in the Buddha's life, aligning himself with William Jones, Harvard and Davy in presenting the Buddha as reformer. But biographies that distance the Buddha from the human continue as in, for instance, Spence Hardy's rendering of Sinhala sources in *A Manual of Buddhism*.

In the last decades, there is further humanizing and individualizing of the Buddha. With increased access to textual sources, Rhys Davids and Copleston stress that there is a *Tipiṭaka* biography in keeping with Western historical method. Former Buddhas disappear. Although some missionaries stress the inaccessibility of the historical Buddha because of textual unreliability, the winning picture of the Buddha is of a heroic, compassionate man. Some missionaries use this to undermine Arnold's representation, but, generally speaking, the Buddha as human teacher, truth-seeker and empathizer with the world's suffering becomes worthy of praise, even by those who pronounced his teaching false.

As the twentieth century opens, two voices run counter to this progression: the theosophist tendency to interpret Buddhahood in terms of esoteric theory and Allan Bennett's faith-based conviction that the Buddha is far more than human.

Soul or no-soul

Anattā does not emerge as a Buddhist doctrine until the scholarship of Gogerly. Before Gogerly, Buddhism is seen as endorsing the concept of a transmigrating soul. Percival thus speaks of an immortal soul, Upham, of a strong body/soul duality and Joinville, of a mortal soul that will eventually cease after innumerable lives. Only Davy suggests that the soul in Buddhism is subtle and fragile.

In the middle years, the majority view continues to be that Buddhists believe in a transmigrating soul. Forbes and Selkirk couple this with a process of purification, Sullivan, with degradation. It is Gogerly's seminal paper, 'On Transmigration', that fractures the discourse in its literalist argument that there is no continuity of being across births and no concept of a soul in Buddhism. All who come after Gogerly are forced to engage with his view. Hardy, for instance, follows Gogerly's line. Knighton opposes it.

As the century draws to an end, the main distinction is between those who uncritically accept Gogerly's theory, and those such as Leadbeater and Arnold who shift the focus to a wrong concept of self rather than no-self. Rhys Davids remains in-between, denying that *anattā*, as no-soul, is nihilistic, seeing it rather as a doctrine that can lead to psychological liberation in this life. Ananda Metteyya goes further. Refusing to use the word soullessness, he speaks of the unreality of the self and presents a cosmic vision of the 'One Life'.

The Four Noble Truths

It is not until the middle years of the century that the Four Noble Truths are itemized and not until the last 30 years that they are privileged. In the early years there are only hints of their existence. Upham, for instance, drawing from Burmese sources, claims that the Buddha knew 'Four Laws or Sizza' but does not explain them. And Davy declares that eternal transmigrations 'with the certainty of a very large proportion of pain and misery' (Davy 1821: 180) might be a greater evil than annihilation. Both also speak about 'subduing the passions'.

Within the middle years, only Spence Hardy and Gogerly, of my writers, mention the Truths specifically. Others such as Knighton and Sirr, as in the early years, simply include aspects of their content such as Buddhism's emphasis on the pain of existence and the necessity to cultivate detachment.

In Gogerly's writing, the Truths first appear in 1839 but the explanation of them is relegated to a footnote. They are mentioned again in 1845 but not until 1861 are they in any way privileged. This sidelining is also seen in Spence Hardy's early publications. In his later writings, however, he appropriates Gogerly's 1839 interpretation and gives them greater centrality. This then becomes the standard viewpoint of the missionaries.

It is after 1870 that the Truths move towards centre stage with polarized interpretations, positive and negative. In these decades, they become the touchstone from which the whole of Buddhism is judged.

Meditation

Recognition that meditation played a part within Buddhism emerged only gradually in the century. Among the early writers, it is again Davy and Upham who mention it. Davy states almost in passing, that one of the 'rules' for the laity is 'meditating on the uncertainty of human affairs' (Davy 1821: 227). Upham links it in a derogatory way with abstraction.

In the middle years, it enters the writing of the scholarly and non-scholarly. One normative non-scholarly reaction is to caricature, as Sirr does when speaking of the Buddha 'slumbering' under the Bo Tree (Sirr 1850, I: 170). But Gogerly, the scholar, advances little beyond this. Mesmerism and insensibility are his key words. Spence Hardy is the one who deals with meditation in the greatest detail. But although he sees positive elements in the *brahmavihāra*, he makes meditation

look rather ridiculous and also dangerous, an occult attempt to reach supernatural attainments. Two important assumptions emerge from his coverage: that meditation is for the monastic Sangha only and that meditation on *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*, usually represented in the nineteenth century as impermanence, suffering and no-soul, is part of the ontology of Buddhism. In these years, Knighton is the lone voice among my writers who places meditation at the centre of Buddhism, but he gives no description of it.

In the later years of the century, others join Knighton. Dickson is probably first to present *bhāvanā*, meditation, as an important lay practice, although Davy had implied this in 1821. Significantly, he links it with the gaining of insight. Copleston and Rhys Davids realize its importance, coupling it with contemplating truth or arriving at truth, although, for Copleston, this means implication in a movement towards apathy. Both, however, found it difficult to harmonize what they discover about the *jhāna* (meditative absorptions) and *samādhi* (concentration) with their total interpretation of Buddhism. As Childers, they link the former with the gaining of supernatural powers, and both with forms of trance or mesmerism, revealing the continuing influence of Gogerly. Childers, however, does give a positive spin to meditation on compassion and also emphasizes the gaining of calmness. As for the theosophists, Leadbeater makes little mention of it, except for a mention of meditating on an object, in his smaller catechism, and a distinctly cognitive flavour is given to it.[6]

Within my writers, Ananda Metteyya is the exception. His writings cover meditation on the *brahmavihāra* (divine abidings), *sati* (mindfulness), *samatha* (tranquillity meditation), *vipassanā* (insight meditation), *samādhi* (concentration) and the *jhāna* (meditative absorptions). All are linked either to liberating insight or compassionate action. The *jhāna* and *samādhi*, for instance, are not associated with trance but with ecstatic and heightened awareness of reality. It is also only in Ananda Metteyya that solitary, sitting meditation is raised to an essential part of Buddhist practice, as a form of attitude-changing and insight-facilitating mind culture.

Patterning the developments

In some of the categories mentioned here, earlier representations differ substantially from those in the later decades of the century. In others there is a clear linear development from early to late. Can we learn anything from this about the presence within, or the entry into, Sri Lankan Buddhism of elements that have been termed Protestant or modernist? I would like to argue that we can, if we combine the data with exploration into the sources the British were using.

17

THE ROOTS OF BUDDHIST MODERNISM

In his first article on Protestant Buddhism, Obeyesekere referred to 'a greater commitment to the doctrine' (Obeyesekere 1970: 57) as one of Protestant Buddhism's features, but 'doctrine' is not defined. Bond, drawing on Ames and Bechert, nuanced this by distinguishing three types of Buddhist revivalist: the Kandyan elite who sought to regain their traditional position; militant reformists who followed the Anagārika Dharmapāla and neotraditionalists who, while admiring Dharmapala, sought less radical ways of restoring Buddhism (Bond 1988: 62–3). Each, according to Bond, had a different perspective on Buddhist soteriology, the neotraditionalists supporting the traditional distinction between lay and ordained, and by extension a gradual path to enlightenment with restricted religious goals for the laity, and the followers of Dharmapala promoting the idea of *nibbāna* in this life for lay and ordained. Young and Somaratne, and Trainor have added a further neotraditionalist dimension, cutting across Bond's soteriological distinctions: the revivalist members of the monastic Sangha and laity who fiercely championed devotional practices such as veneration of relics and eventually judged the non-ritualistic approach of Olcott inimical to the *dhamma* (Young and Somaratne 1996: 198–226; Trainor 1997: 15).

In spite of the existence of these important distinctions, the following characteristics have been associated with Protestant Buddhism: a search for the rational; a this-worldly, energetic lay asceticism directed towards attaining *nibbāna* in this life; an individualism that privileged personal spiritual attainment over the collective merit-making of a group; an undercutting of the traditional distinction between lay and ordained; intolerance of other faiths; rejection of ritual and 'superstitious' practices linked with exorcism and 'spirit religion' and the appropriation and privileging of doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths, the three defining characteristics of existence (*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*; impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self) and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamupāda*).

Bond illustrated this nexus through Olcott's 1881 catechism, quoting these sections:

Q: Do these precepts show that Buddhism is an active or passive religion?

A: To 'cease from sin' may be called passive, but to 'get virtue' and 'to cleanse one's own heart,' or mind, are altogether *active* qualities. Buddha taught that

we should not merely not be evil, but that we should be *positively* good (Buddhist Catechism 43).

Q: What other good words have been used to express the essence of Buddhism?
A: Self-culture and universal love (Buddhist Catechism 54).
Q: Did the Buddha hold with idol-worship?
A: He did not; he opposed it. The worship of gods, demons, trees etc., was condemned by the Buddha (Buddhist Catechism 55f.).

(Bond 1988: 51–52)

Problematizing the modernist

Can these quotes, however, stand up to the burden of representing what was new in nineteenth century Sri Lankan Buddhism? Only in part, I believe. As Young and Somaratne have argued, the whole idea of a catechism for the laity based on citations from the Theravāda Canon was new in that it broke into the preserve of the ordained specialist (Young and Somaratne 1996: 205). However, the content of these extracts was not as new to the Sri Lankan tradition as Bond assumes.

The breaking in of the new in British representations of Buddhism covered in this study is most visible in the treatment of the Buddha and, more obliquely, in the privileging of the Four Noble Truths and the treatment of meditation. In the first, a process of de-mystification and reductionism occurs, which is Western-led and governed by Western needs. At the beginning of the century, the superhuman status attributed to the Buddha authentically reflected, I believe, lay and ordained belief. In contrast, the compassionate, heroic human who had emerged by the end of the century did not, serving in its place Western historical method and the missionary agenda of situating the Buddha firmly below the divine. It represented a movement away from the oral tradition to a selective reading of the *Tipiṭaka*. The Western construction of the Buddha in turn served Protestant Buddhism's downplaying of the devotional and was key to the quarrel between Olcott and traditional revivalists such as Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda.

To move to the Four Noble Truths, what leaps out of my data is that Westerners such as Gogerly first discovered them in the texts. This would seem to offer convincing proof that the privileging of the Truths was spurred by Western orientalists. But it is not as simple as that, for three reasons. First, when the Truths were found in the texts, they were not immediately interpreted as the 'house' within which the whole of Buddhism lay. There was a gap of several decades before this happened, leaving room for other contingent factors to come into play. Second, much of the content of the Truths had, in fact, already been communicated to Westerners long before Gogerly – to Davy, for instance, by the monastic Sangha in Kandy. Third, the source some Westerners who privileged the Truths drew on was not directly canonical. It was a secondary contemporary Sri Lankan source, as I will show.

The case of meditation is even more interesting. The writings of Davy, Spence Hardy, Knighton and Dickson suggest that there is a change of emphasis during

the century, not the birth of a completely new interpretation. Just as hints of the content of the Four Noble Truths were present in Western representations at the beginning of the century, so was information about meditation. Davy's mention of lay people 'meditating on the uncertainty of human affairs' in effect points to a lay practice of meditation on *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. As the century progressed, meditation moved towards centre-stage in my writers but no reading of the data could argue that this change of emphasis was Western-led. For what is evident in abundance from my writers is that the concept utterly confused them, with the exception of Dickson, who, significantly, argued on empirical rather than textual evidence that meditation was an important part of traditional lay practice. Westerners certainly did not lead the way in reconstructing the tradition here.

The most thorough treatment of the practice of meditation in this period does not come from contact with the Sri Lankan tradition at all but from Ananda Metteyya's monastic experience in Burma, as did the most thorough coverage of meditation in pre-nineteenth-century writings – Buchanan's research published in *Asiatick Researches* (*AS*). It is to the influence of other Asian countries that researchers must go, I believe, to understand change in this area, an influence earlier than George Bond recognizes in his analysis of the Insight Meditation Movement in mid-twentieth-century Sri Lanka (Bond 1988: 129–73).

To cast onto Olcott's catechism and the writing of other orientalists, therefore, the burden of representing and explaining modernist Buddhism is the easy way out.

Knighton as protagonist

It is worth looking at Knighton more closely at this point. He believed that the core of Buddhism was pure, rational and ethical. He was presenting the Buddha as reformer within brahminical culture long before scholars based in the West had latched onto this quite attractive trope. Carol Anderson claimed that the first European she had found presenting the Buddha as reformer was Albrecht Weber, in 1856 (Anderson 1999: 173). Knighton was articulating this apparently Eurocentric perspective several years before. And he was not the first. Harvard and Davy had presented the Buddha as reformer over 20 years before that, and William Jones, another 20 years before that. Knighton was not the first either to place ethics at the centre of Buddhism. Upham had done so in the late 1820s. Then there is this phrase from Knighton, written long before Olcott's catechism, 'Buddhism is essentially a philosophical religion. Its virtue is meditation, and its perfection an entire victory over the senses and passions' (Knighton 1845a: 338).

Knighton's construction of Buddhism parallels the Protestant Buddhism defined by Bond and Obeyesekere in the following ways: rejection of what could be seen as superstitious elements in favour of what is obviously rational; emphasis on ethics and mind-training and the drawing of a strong distinction between Buddhist religious practices and non-Buddhist ones. An enterprising researcher could perhaps make a case that Knighton was the author of the Protestant or Reformed representation of Buddhism!

Such a conclusion might appeal to those seeking to prove that religious change in nineteenth-century Sri Lanka was driven by Western orientalists. They could argue that Knighton drew on the translations of Gogerly and Hardy for his understanding of Buddhist doctrine and that his picture of the Buddha as a reformer came purely from the transference of Christian categories. But this is not sufficient. He drew also on the words of Sri Lankans, as did Harvard, Sirr, Forbes and Upham, albeit through the material sent to him by Sir Alexander Johnston. Sri Lankan agency is crucial, I believe, in what emerged, and it was not solely the agency of a Western-orientated elite.

Interaction between Western seekers and Ceylonese Buddhists

During Sri Lanka's period of colonial domination, some Europeans formally asked for descriptions of Buddhism from Sri Lankans.[1] In the Dutch period, one of the most prominent inquirers was Imam Willem Falck. Governor of the maritime provinces between 1765 and 1785, he seems to have possessed a tolerant and curious attitude towards Buddhism, which led him to address questionnaires to the monastic Sangha. English translations of some of these documents were published in the first half of the nineteenth century, thus allowing them to become an additional resource for my writers.

This eighteenth-century material poses two questions to students of the nineteenth century: Could it have contributed to the development of what has been termed Protestant Buddhism? Does it confirm that there was a radical discontinuity between Buddhism as traditionally communicated before the British colonial period and Buddhism as constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century?

Apart from one Dutch original, translated for me by Margareth Hoogewoud,[2] I shall use the translations that were accessed by my writers. One of the first British people to draw from the questionnaires was Captain Mahoney (Mahoney 1801) but I shall not use him here. The first published translations appeared in Volume III of Edward Upham's 1833 British publication (Upham 1833). They included a 17-point questionnaire answered by 5 sources, and a longer questionnaire answered by members of the Kandyan monastic Sangha, mediated through a Mudeliar Rajapakse (Upham 1833, III: 107–68).[3] It is this last document that I was able to find in its original Dutch and have translated by Margareth Hoogewoud, as it was offered to Sir Alexander Johnston on 31 January 1809 by someone who simply signed himself 'D'. A further questionnaire was serialized in *The Friend* (*TF*), in 1842. It was given a date of 1770 and presented as a document written by 'the priests of Mulkirigala, an ancient cave temple not far from Tangalle, in answer to certain questions proposed, we believe, by the Dutch government' (Spence Hardy 1842: 183). The questionnaire was the same as that answered by the Kandyan monastic Sangha mentioned earlier.

The translations are flawed, particularly Upham's. As I have already noted, Upham's version of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, in the same three-volume collection, was

mercilessly criticized in the nineteenth century itself by George Turnour. He accused the Sinhala monks who revised the original of making a compilation of their own and Johnson's 'official translator' of perverting the sense of the Sinhala abridgement (Turnour 1836: viii–xx). The Questionnaires, however, would have gone through a completely different process. Margareth Hoogewoud's contemporary translation of the answers given by the Kandyan monastic Sangha suggests that Upham's translation from Dutch to English was fairly accurate, in spite of some christianized phraseology. What would be more difficult to recover is the original Sinhala, particularly for the Kandy document, which gives the impression of being an immediate, oral translation into Dutch through a third person. In the case of the document published in *TF*, Spence Hardy, the editor, cannot resist making his own comments, but he places these in brackets, suggesting that his aim was to retain the integrity of the text. The benefit of these flawed documents, however, is that they were published in the first half of the nineteenth century and therefore were the translations available to writers such as Knighton, who knew both documents.[4]

The first questionnaire in Upham's collection, which I shall call Questionnaire One, was answered, in Upham's words, by Mulgirri Galle, Chief Priest Karatotta Oenanse; The Galle Priests and Mahagodda Oenanse; The Mahabadda Priests and an unnamed source described as 'A Doctrinal Tract communicated by Rajapaxe'. The 17 questions betray an unmistakably Christian agenda. Belief rather than path, proposition rather than action, are stressed. They would not have much credibility in the world of scholarship now! They included, numbered as in the original:

1 What views have you of the Supreme Being? or are there more gods than one?
2 How do you account for the creation of the world?
5 How did sin enter the world?
6 Have men souls, or some principle or spirit that lives after the body dies?
7 Are there further rewards and punishments after this life, or do all men go to the same place?
8 What are your views of heaven or a place of happiness?
9 What are your views of hell or a place of misery?
10 How is the place of misery to be shunned?
11 How is the place of happiness to be secured?
12 What are your views of moral good and evil?
13 What laws or commandments have you?
14 Is there any such thing in man as conscience, whereby he feels uneasy when he breaks the law or does wrong?
15 What are the perfections of your god or gods?
16 Have you any books or ancient writings to direct you?

(Upham 1833, III: 3–30)

The series of questions answered by members of the monastic Sangha in Kandy and Mulgirigala, which I shall call Questionnaire Two, numbered 88. Again questions concerning a Supreme God, lesser gods and creation dominated, and were repeated with a relentless repetitive pressure, as if the questioner had difficulty in hearing the answers offered. Question 5, for instance, using the translation that appeared in *TF* was, 'Did the Supreme God make Heaven and Earth?' (Spence Hardy 1842: 188). Nearer the end came: Do the Singhalese know how the world was created?; Who made the heavens and the earth?; When was the earth created?; From what was the world made? (Questions 38–41, Spence Hardy 1842: 88–9). The following is a sample of the questions, numbered as in the original, again from the translation in *TF*:

1 Are the learned among the Singhalese acquainted with any science or religion which teaches that there is one supreme God, higher than all? If so, in what are the acts of this Supreme Being recorded?
2 Is there an immortal spirit or soul?
3 Is there any God, existent from eternity and everlasting?
4 Did the supreme God make the inferior gods?
5 Did the supreme God make heaven and earth?
13 Is it true that in the Singhalese books there are accounts of many other Budhas, in addition to the Gowtama Budha who visited Ceylon?
14 What is the name Budha?
15 Was the Budha the descendant of a god or of a man?
16 Did not Budha come from heaven to shew men the way to salvation?
31 Do the Singhalese honor and serve the devils? why do they do these things? why do they refuse to leave off this kind of service whilst they follow it more and more?
38 Do the Singhalese know how the world and other things were created?
39 Who made the heavens and the earth?
40 When was the earth created?
41 From what was the earth made?
49 Is the supreme God imperfect and stained with sin, or is he entirely holy?
53 What are the principal commands or ordinances of Budha?
68 What are men to do to be saved?
81 Why do the Singhalese pay honor to cows?

(Spence Hardy 1842)

Upham's translation differs from these in detail only. Question Two can be taken as an example: Is there an immortal spirit or soul? (*TF*); Have the Cingalese any notion of a ghost or an immaterial being? (Upham); Have the scholars any understanding of a Spirit or of an immaterial being? (contemporary translation by Hoogewoud from the Dutch original).

Surveying the answers

The Buddha

Questionnaire One did not focus on the Buddha. Questions 1, 13, 15 and 16 encouraged some to mention him, but beyond the attribution of superhuman qualities such as 'endless dispositions, wisdoms, charities, glories etc...' (Upham 1833, III: 29) little information is given.

The most interesting and detailed account of the Buddha comes in Mulgirigala's answers to Questionnaire Two. When asked whether the Sinhala books spoke of many Buddhas, a detailed chronology of Buddhas is given (Spence Hardy 1842: 227). 'What is the name Budha?' elicits the following, Spence Hardy's editorial notes in brackets:

> He knew all things in the three times, present, past, and future; in every possible mode; not by the teaching of others but by his own intuition; he saw all things; he saw the things that cannot be seen (by others); he had destroyed klesha (attachment to existing objects); he overcame birth (or the repetition of existence); he most certainly destroyed evil desire, enmity, and error; he most certainly extinguished klēsha; he most certainly entered the path to nirwana (cessation of existence);...he destroyed ignorance; he attained the most excellent wisdom.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1842: 228)

'Was the Budha the descendant of a god or of a man?' though, hit the jackpot. The immediate answer is simply that the Buddha was both divine and human in his descent. This point is then illustrated cleverly and movingly in a vivid biographical narrative drawing from canonical and non-canonical sources covering 16 pages of *TF*. The Buddha becomes a being far above the gods unvanquished by the Evil One. The Buddha, for instance, is seen saying to *Māra*:

> Sinful Wasawarttimāraya! on account of this throne, in the accomplishing of the paramitāwas during 4 asankyas and a lac of kalpas, I have given in charity more of the flesh of my body than would be equal to the mass of the earth; I have given more blood than the water of the ocean.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1842: 28–9)

Mulgirigala's Buddha is located at the heart of a cosmic struggle between good and evil.

The Kandy respondents did not rise to the chance to retell the Buddha's life. Their longest answer concerned ritual at Kataragama. But a clear definition of a Buddha was given: 'Omniscience, A Saint above all Saints' (Hoogewoud's translation); 'omniscient, a saint superior to all saints' (Upham 1833, III: 143).

Hoogewoud's translation of the Dutch document continued:

> A Saint above all Saints, and even above the supreme God Mahabrachmeâ, although it is understood that Buddha is not really a God, but is considered as a man and through time, because of his extraordinary Beneficial Virtues and Qualities, has attained the stage of Buddha, not that he has obtained the Name from a higher power, but has taken it by his own sovereign will.

To a later question, 'Is he not to be considered as one sent from heaven to publish to men the way of salvation?' (Upham 1833, III: 144), the Kandy respondents declare,

> No! in the fullness of time, and according to the predictions of numberless ages, at the request of the said gods, and by his own sovereign will, he became man, for the salvation of all who should embrace his doctrine.
> (Upham 1833, III: 144)

Anattā

The first four respondents to Questionnaire One affirm that there is a principle that continues after death when answering question six, which referred to a soul but not an 'immortal' soul. The first cites '*Winyanaskandaya*' or consciousness as that principle. The third and fourth, according to Upham's translation, refer to a 'soul' (Upham 1833, III: 14, 18). The fifth respondent contested the question, naming the five *khandha* (the five components that make up the human being) and declaring, 'all these will perish, and the body will only remain as a wooden image, but nothing else' (Upham 1833, III: 24).

The responses to question two of Questionnaire Two, which inquired about an immortal spirit or an immaterial being in Buddhism, were significantly different from the ones to question six in Questionnaire One. Both respondents categorically denied the existence of such an immortal spirit, although the Kandy respondents added that the gods might seem to be spirits (Upham 1833, III: 138; Spence Hardy 1842: 187). However, in answer to question four, 'Has the Most High Supreme Being created the lesser gods?' the Kandy respondents returned this, and I use Hoogewoud's translation:

> However, according to the Revealed Teaching of the Buddhas, not the least is mentioned about created souls and the scholars only speak of a Breath of Life in Man, which they compare to a creeping worm or leech that firstly clings on to something with its snout or mouth, before it lets go with its hindparts. Consequently, they judge that the body does not

> die until and before the Breath of Life clings on to something, either that it has a prospect to go up into Heaven or his exit must go to damnation (hell) to undergo there for a time or for ever hellish pains (sufferings).[5]

Then, in another question, which appears in Hoogewoud's translation but not in Upham's and which directly asked whether the human soul was immortal, the Kandyans referred back to this answer adding that the 'breath of life' was immortal.[6] Mulgirigala, however, was consistent throughout, stating that, 'there is no such thing as an immortal spirit' (Spence Hardy 1842: 109).

Nibbāna

None of the questions referred specifically to *nibbāna*. When questioned about 'heaven' most respondents assumed this referred to the Buddhist concept of the heavens. In Questionnaire One, however, the first and fifth groups decided that *nibbāna* was relevant to a 'heaven' question:

> There is a place of happiness called *Nirwanāpooraya* where is neither misery nor death, but they enjoy happiness for ever and ever.
>
> *Nirwana* is the highest and best place, which destroys all sorrow, and acquires all happiness.
>
> (Upham 1833, III: 5, 25)

In Questionnaire Two, both Mulgirigala and Kandy bring in *nibbāna* when asked about the present location of the Buddha. The Kandyans, in this question and another, describe *nibbāna* as a locatable region, 'a Glory Hall of Buddhas who have died', higher than the twenty sixth heaven, where the Buddha lives in 'joy, magnificence and immortality' (Upham 1833, III: 135, 159). Mulgirigala, in contrast, present it as a condition: 'The present condition of the Budhas is on this wise: – they are entirely free from birth, decay, sickness, death and sorrow' (Spence Hardy 1842: 47).

The Four Noble Truths

None of the questionnaires mentioned the Four Noble Truths. But, significantly, the Truths are mentioned to the Dutch, by Mulgirigala, in answer to 'What is the name Budhu?' in Questionnaire Two. The Buddha gained his title, the monks state, because he knew, 'perfectly the four truths, like an amalaka fruit held in the hand, and taught them to gods and men'. They were then named by the respondents but not explained, at least not in Spence Hardy's version (Spence Hardy 1842: 228). Spence Hardy places his own explanation alongside the Truths.[7] In this document, therefore, they are given a central place, representing the doctrine as a whole, a usage fitting perfectly into Anderson's 'symbolic' category (Anderson 1999: 55).

Religious path

In spite of the Dutch preoccupation with propositional truth, both questionnaires provided opportunity for the respondents to speak about religious path. Questionnaire One offered this in questions 9–13. Unsurprisingly, the doing of good and the avoiding of evil were almost uniformly cited by the respondents, together with variants of the five precepts. The Galle priests, for instance, in answer to question 13 listed the first 4 precepts and then gave 5 more, which covered different forms of false speech, coveting and, lastly, 'Do not err in the true faith, or think it to be false' (Upham 1833, III: 12).

Only the first and last groups answering Questionnaire One went beyond moral action. Mulgirigala echoed *Dhammapada* verse 183 and therefore brought in purifying the mind (*sacittapariyodapanaṁ*) or 'the conscience' as it was translated (Upham 1833, III: 5). The unnamed fifth respondent offered the greatest detail as shown in the following selected parts:

> 9 Wise men, who perform charities, avoiding bad deeds, and who do not allow themselves to be possessed of sins by means of the following three doors, namely, body, word, and the mind, they shall not be subjected to any sufferings of the said apayas [the lower worlds].
>
> 10 He who becomes righteous himself, getting free from the following sins, viz. killing animals, lying, covetousness etc. which proceed from the body, word, and mind; and who becomes himself kind and good towards mankind, and does other charities, shall be saved from the four apayas designed for the wretched, or sinners.
>
> 11 By all means getting free from sins, and by keeping, or by the assistance of the law, doing good, by behaving himself well; minding these three things, viz. anittayah (not lasting for ever) dook-kayah (sorrow), anātmayah (not a body), thus may be obtained Mōksayah.
>
> 13 The commandments are: the not delaying agriculture and trade, etc; the doing charity; the not doing all the sin that proceeds from the inlets above mentioned, such as body etc; the acquiring of blessings by means of alms; keeping commandments; thoughtfulness with regard to religion; the faculty of the mind in destroying the different sinful senses; and the joy, etc. When the mind is blotted by covetousness, etc. he surely takes the bad journey which goes to hell. So the mind must be pure by avoiding covetousness, thoughtlessness, etc. which are the causes of evil. The casting away of shame and fear from the mind is the origin of all sin; and retaining of shame and fear is favourable to every good; and as thoughtlessness is a cause of many evils, one must always be thoughtful.
>
> (Upham 1833, III: 25–7)

The original is needed here but, even without it, it is clear that these answers not only stress moral action but guarding the senses (*indriya saṁvara*), mindfulness

(*sati*), meditation on *anicca, dukkha* and *anattā* and purifying the mind. A wide spectrum of Buddhist doctrine is presented and the emphasis is most definitely activist.

Religious path entered Questionnaire Two mainly in the last questions, with, for instance, 'What are men to do to be saved?' (*TF*), 'What has a man to do to become blessed (to be saved)?' (Hoogewoud). The question is omitted in Upham's translation. Both respondents stressed action, not belief, no doubt surprising their Christian questioners:

> To conform his thoughts, words and works to Buddha's revealed teaching and to keep/practise this constantly.
>
> (Kandy – Hoogewoud's translation)

> They are to do good in body, word and thought . . . The goodness of the mind consists in not coveting that which belongs to another, not wishing the destruction of any creature, the not thinking that the thing which is, is not; that the thing which is not, is; that the thing which is true, is false; or that the thing that is false, is true; thus avoiding all error.
>
> (Spence Hardy 1842: 111)

Devotion

The fifteenth question in Questionnaire One inquired about Buddhist 'worship'. The answers communicated were short and, significantly, did not refer to what Christians would normally consider to be worship, but rather to faith, belief and action, in a pattern similar to the answers concerning 'salvation'. Thus, the first and third respondents claimed that worship consisted in what is translated as 'true faith', the former adding 'remembering always virtue' (Upham 1833, III: 6). The second echoed this, comparing faith to, 'a precious stone that cleareth the troubled water', a phrase from the commentarial tradition of Buddhaghosa (Upham 1833, III: 12; Buddhaghosa 1991: 467). The fourth claimed, 'Our worship consists in the laws and the commandments' (Upham 1833, III: 20) and the fifth stressed the *Tisaraṇa*: the importance of right belief, especially in 'Budhu, his words and his priests' (Upham 1833, III: 28).

More questions about prayer and worship appeared in Questionnaire Two, and both respondents brought in the devotional. Mulgirigala's answers were short and referred to 'forms of praise to Budha'; 'worship' of 'the three precious gems'; a weekly festival like Sunday; honouring of 'the relics, pictures, and images of the Buddha, and the sacred books' and worship at the '*dewālas*' and '*kowilas*'. And there was an interesting addendum, 'There are four festivals appointed every month (at the changes of the moon); not only so, every day on which a man, in body, speech, and mind, abstains from sin, is to him a festival' (Spence Hardy 1843: 124–5).

The Kandy response to Questionnaire Two was similar to Mulgirigala's. It linked worship with the *Tisaraṇa*, and a self-appointed 'feast day', with avoiding

evil in thought, word and action (Upham 1833, III: 162–3). But much more was added, for example what lay people do when they visit a temple and what the ten precepts are. And there is an interesting take on relic worship: 'such only taking place to their commemoration, without ascribing however any miraculous working to the afore-mentioned Relics' (Hoogewoud; Upham 1833, III: 161).

Exorcism

The Mulgirigala respondents to Questionnaire Two gave an ambiguous message on exorcism. In answer to, 'In what manner do the Sinhalese worship the devils?', they mentioned '*bali*' ceremonies, and charms and medicines administered by '*yakaduras*' to drive away disease. 'Further than this', they added, 'the devils are not religiously worshipped' (Spence Hardy 1842: 86).

The Kandyan respondents to Questionnaire Two were far more direct: 'They believe that there are devils in the world, but according to the doctrine of Budhu, they are not permitted to honour them' (Upham 1833, III: 152). Yet, in a further question, they were forced to admit that, in spite of the Buddha's censure, the Sinhalese did honour the devil, because the devil had power to inflict sickness (Upham 1833, III: 153).

Cosmology

A rich cosmological picture emerges when the answers to the questionnaires are taken together. All, without exception, denied that Buddhists believed in a Creator and placed the Buddha above the gods. All willingly described a cosmic pantheon, Questionnaire Two giving most opportunity for this. Both the Mulgirigala and the Kandyan respondents, for instance, listed all the heavens in answer to the first question. At another point, Mulgirigala gave an extensive list of the 'inferior gods', (Spence Hardy 1842: 207) and the Kandyans, when asked about the messengers of these gods, described an intricate hierarchy of command and obedience, with the Buddha at the top (Upham 1833, III: 142–3).

Significant patterns

When the content of the responses I have isolated are compared, the picture of Buddhism presented to the Dutch questioners, assuming some had access to all the responses, included:

- a rich cosmology of heavens, hells and deities;
- devotional practices that included vows to guide ethical living;
- the Buddha as the discoverer of four truths concerned with liberation from suffering and one of a series of beings far above the human;
- a religious path that involved eradicating greed, hatred and delusion and the vow to do good in thought, word and deed;

- an inconsistent picture concerning the existence of a soul, coupled with a strong conviction that continuity of some kind existed between lives;
- a belief that positive, moral action was the main factor determining human happiness or misery;
- an awareness that, in addition to moral action, there was a task of cleansing the consciousness or purifying the mind;
- that for lay people there was an ethic that stressed agriculture, trade and wealth creation as commendable activities;
- that there was a blissful place or a state called *nibbāna*, linked with the Buddha but not exclusively;
- that the Sinhala people believed in the existence of devils and engaged in activities to placate them, but that worship of devils was censured.

The respondents were learned members of the monastic Sangha. Internal evidence suggests, however, that they were not speaking about their spiritual life alone but about the general message of Buddhism. When their representation of Buddhism is compared to stereotypical Protestant Buddhism, differences leap out. They do not mention sitting meditation, for instance, or reduction of consumption for lay people, a this-worldly asceticism. Quite the reverse in fact – the Mulgirigala respondents to Questionnaire Two promise 'forty thousand or eighty thousand kelas of riches' to those who have done good (Spence Hardy 1842: 109). Veneration of relics, rich devotional practices to the Buddhas, placating the forces of evil, and belief in an intimidatingly vast array of deities, heavens and hells are all present. But so also are perspectives with a decidedly 'Protestant' flavour: the need for energetic spiritual discipline for lay and ordained; an activist but ethical path of wealth creation for lay people and a privileging of *Dhammapada* verse 183, the Four Noble Truths and the roots of suffering, *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha* (greed, hatred and delusion). There is also a decidedly cautious attitude to *bali* ceremonies and exorcism. Although what nineteenth-century Christian missionaries would have called the irrational is present, there is also much that comes across as rational and indeed philosophical, in particular the emphasis on ethics.

The answers to these questionnaires, I would suggest, show that generalizations about what is drawn from Western scholarship into the Sri Lankan tradition during the nineteenth century should be avoided because they are likely to bear false witness to the variety within the lived indigenous tradition. And I am not alone in saying this. Copleston did so long before me.[8] There is certainly material within these questionnaires to aid Knighton's conclusion that Buddhism is philosophical, rational and ethical.

18

ONE TRADITION, DIFFERING VOICES

That there existed in Sri Lanka different witnesses to Buddhism's lived tradition, which both Sri Lankans and Europeans drew from in the nineteenth century, is illustrated beautifully by two further accounts offered to Europeans by Sri Lankans. They are about 60 years apart, but both appeared before 'Protestant Buddhism' developed. The first is a description of Buddhist doctrine prepared for Falck, again by Mulgirigala, and included in Upham's third volume. The second is the previously mentioned compendium of Buddhist doctrine by the venerable Kitulgama Devamitta, completed in 1826 for Simon Sawers, then Judicial Commissioner, and translated into English by John Armour,[1] who placed an abridged version of it in the 1835 Ceylon Almanac. Devamitta was a renowned scholar and poet, whose work was appreciated particularly by scholars within the civil service.[2]

The significance of these two treatises is that they are so different from one another. The former gives a lengthy biography of the Buddha and then offers advice concerning lay morality.[3] The second concentrates on philosophy, starting with the concept of *saṃsāra* (the cycle of repeated birth and death) and moving to the Four Noble Truths. It draws heavily on the *Tipiṭaka*, and the commentarial tradition of Buddhaghosa, particularly the *Visuddhimagga*.

I will not concentrate on the biographical material within the first document. At certain points it touches Mulgirigala's answer to, 'Was the Budha the descendant of a god or of a man?' but it is not the same. The battle with *Māra* at the Buddha's enlightenment, for example, is dismissed in a couple of sentences. It is enough here to say that it belongs to the hagiographic and the nationalistic, drawing both from the island's historical chronicles and Pāli and Sinhala narrative. It is further illustration of the extent to which later Western accounts reduced the richness of the tradition.

Following the biography is a description of 'the high doctrine of the Budhu' (Upham 1833, III: 96), which turns out to be an outline of moral ideals for the lay person. The five precepts are itemized, but as actions that would lead to rebirth in hell. For example, the third becomes: 'whoever desires women shall be obliged to suffer many oppressions in this world itself, and hereafter be born again in hell'

(Upham 1833, III: 97). The description then turns to correct livelihood, which involved:

> good riches obtained by one's own labour, by sowing and reaping, and by carrying on good trade, to give to the poor with joy, to think of Budhu, to maintain his good doctrine, to assist his adherents, to keep his institutions, to be equally charitable to all men, to honour parents, masters, Budhu, and his followers... He who is and remains so, shall, after this life, go to Brachma-Loka and, enjoying every thing good, inherit Nirwāna.
>
> (Upham 1833, III: 99)

The treatise ends with a story in which the Buddha promises the following blessings to those who would make a Buddha image or write his sermons: never to be born in hell, out of the world, the son of a slave or as a woman; the possession of riches – 'in pearls, precious stones, paddy, rice, fine clothes, slaves, faithful subjects, elephants, horses, coaches, palenkeens, cows and buffaloes'; being born in heaven (Upham 1833, III: 104).

The treatise seems to reflect the teaching that might have been given to lay people at the time. The narrative tradition is strong. 'Doctrine' concerns lay morality. No mention is made of the Four Noble Truths or *anicca*, *dukkha or anattā*. It is interesting on two counts. First, a world affirming activism is present. 'To give to the poor with joy', for instance, could have come out of Olcott's Catechism, and the emphasis on wealth creation, out of the ethic the Protestant British sought to encourage. Second, when *nibbāna* is mentioned, renunciation is not stressed as a necessary prerequisite. If the translation can be trusted at this point, the implication is that a good, virtuous life is enough to reach the state of *anāgāmi*, the non-returner (one who will not return to human birth but will be born in one of the highest heavens and from there gain *nibbāna*). *Nibbāna* is not placed in an impossibly distant future for the lay person. It is a possible goal in this life, again a touching point with Protestant Buddhism, albeit without an emphasis on meditation or lay asceticism.

Devamitta's compendium as abridged by Armour, begins with the concept of *dukkha*, through a complex definition of *saṃsāra* as encompassing all time, and the alternations of birth and death in different levels of being. An analysis of the human person using the five *khandha* and their numerous sub-divisions comes next (Devamitta 1835: 213–16), followed by the process of existence or becoming (*bhāva*) and its three planes, *kāma-bhāva*, *rūpa bhāva* and *ārūpa-bhāva*. Cosmology is then linked with this, drawing on Abhidhamma literature and the commentarial tradition. For instance, the five *gati* (destinations) – heavenly worlds, the human world, the realm of the *pretas* or ghosts, the animal kingdom, the hells – are listed and then equated with different states of consciousness (*viññāna*), translated by Armour as 'perception'. The text then passes to the causes of continued births. The 5 *hetu* (conditions) and 5 *phala* (fruits) are

itemized, after which comes:

> It is owing to our ignorance, our affections and passions, our avarice and concupiscence, our enjoyments, and our attachment to existence in the preceding life, that we are now reorganized and compounded of sense and matter, endued with intellect, possessed of the six faculties of hearing &c, of consciousness and of intense susceptibility and because of our present ignorance, our passions and affections, our desires, our gratifications, and our love of life, we shall suffer the consequence of being born again.
>
> (Devamitta 1835: 218)

Having described the misery suffered by living beings, Devamitta then brings in the Buddha as rescuer, stressing his self-sacrifice:

> There is nothing in existence capable of bearing comparison with the aggregate amount and quantity of the eyes, the heads, the flesh and the blood which he will have sacrificed in the course of the abovesaid period of 400,000 asankas of calpas, in order that he may attain to Buddhaship and benefit the world.
>
> (Devamitta 1835: 220)

A detailed description of the Buddha's final life is then given. His enlightenment is linked with discovery of the law of cause and effect, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the destruction of ignorance and the 'four sublime truths': knowledge which 'surpasseth the comprehension even of gods and brahmas' (Devamitta 1835: 222).

After this, Devamitta explains the saving doctrine rediscovered by each Buddha, beginning with *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and then moving to the Four Noble Truths. Later scholastic additions are included so that his explanation of the second truth brings in a threefold definition of *taṇhā*: '*Kaamatanhaa, Bhawatanhaa and Wibhawatanhaa*' (Devamitta 1835: 223). After a definition of the 4 paths and the 4 fruits, *Dhammapada* verse 183 is quoted in Pāli and translated, presumably by Armour, as, 'Abstain from all sin, acquire all virtue, repress thine own heart – this is Buddha's injunction' (Devamitta 1835: 226).

The last part of the treatise itemizes the three 'baskets' of the *Tipiṭaka*, refers to 'the beatific vision of Nerwana', stresses the compassion of the Buddha and underscores the efficacy of 'the three talismans or gems' to deliver living beings from misery (Devamitta 1835: 226–7). The traditional threefold discipline of *dāna*, *sīla*, *bhāvanā* (generosity, morality, meditation) is also mentioned, presented in Armour's translation as 'transcendent virtues'. It is worth quoting Devamitta's explanation of *bhāvanā*:

> The term *Bhaawenaa* or meditation shall now be concisely explained; The system of *Panchask'handa* is *anittya* ie. *evanescent and transitory*; its organization being analytically examined, there will not be found a

> single substance that is *permanent*, *Nittya* – it is *misery itself*, *Duk'ha*, as forming a receptacle for the endurance of all misery – it is *foreign and adscititious*, *Anaatma*; and albeit that every person entertains the fallacious notion of *self*, *Aatma*, and therefore cherishes the body, yet in reality it is adventitious and fleeting. Meditating on these circumstances of evanescence, sorrow, and change, on the attributes of the Buddha – on the virtues of mercy, and of benevolence, which wisheth to all beings exemption from disease and grief – reflecting that the corporeal frame is but the semblance of a vessel replete with impurities, though externally beautified with bright and shining colours, and that it is like a stagnant pool teeming with worms – and that *Winyaana*, or intellect, which subsists in the organization of other elements, vanisheth at death, as light vanisheth at the setting of the sun – such meditation is termed *Bhaaweena*.
>
> (Devamitta 1835: 229)

The drawback for anyone accessing Devamitta through the *Ceylon Almanac* was that Devamitta's words were mediated through John Armour. There is a confusion, for instance, in the presentation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* that could owe more to Armour than Devamitta. And the translation of *Dhammapada* verse 183 as 'repress thine own heart' reveals more about the translator than the writer.

In spite of this Armour's translation does not prevent Devamitta's treatise coming across as a clear and rational presentation of doctrine, which 'Protestant' Buddhists might have found acceptable if it had been written in the later decades of the nineteenth century. The Four Noble Truths, for instance, are listed and explained before they appear in Western writing, if I am right in attributing the first itemization of them to Gogerly in 1839. There is even censure of the worship of gods (Devamitta 1835: 225) and a warning against seeing heavenly bliss as the only goal (Devamitta 1835: 228), elements with a decidedly 'Protestant' or modernist flavour.

I believe the witness of Devamitta and documents such as Mulgirigala's answers to Questionnaire Two influenced writers like Knighton and Forbes in their presentation of Buddhism as a rational path with an admirable morality.[4] Devamitta was no doubt aware of European distaste for what might be considered superstitious or irrational. He rose to this challenge, I would suggest, not as a cipher of Western concerns, but as someone able to draw from the multiple witnesses within his own tradition to meet the demand for knowledge from the British in a culturally appropriate way. The quality of his writing concurs with the frequent mention in missionary records of the sophistication and learning of the Sri Lankan monastic Sangha.[5] It is also significant that it was the scholarship of Sri Lankans such as Devamitta that persuaded George Turnour to direct his linguistic ability towards Buddhist history rather than doctrine on the grounds that there were Sri Lankans who could explain doctrine much better than he.

There was, however, one major point of difference between Devamitta's representation of doctrine and modernist constructions. Devamitta's representation of doctrine is combined with a concept of Buddhahood that places compassion, self-sacrifice and the discovery of liberative truth above asserting the individual identity of any one Buddha. Westerners in Sri Lanka sought for the historical Buddha and this was internalized by some Sri Lankan Buddhists, even though the reductionism that resulted fed into the anti-Buddhist agenda of the missionaries. Sri Lankans such as Devamitta refused to do this:

> Should any person act spitefully against this exalted being, who from pure love and the wish of dispensing happiness and salvation unto all, has rendered sacrifices of his flesh and blood, his wives and children, his kingdom and lives, receiving no aid nor contribution from others, and by his sole exertions attained the state of a Buddha, such sinful man will only cause detriment to himself, as if he were to neglect tilling the ground which alone could give him sustenance.
>
> (Devamitta 1835: 229)

19

THREAT TO THE DHAMMA, A DHAMMA RENEWED

Constance Gordon Cumming was one British visitor who came to the conclusion that some Westerners were creating a theoretical Buddhism with no foundation in reality (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 416). She went on to assume that religious change within Sri Lanka was the result of Western oriental scholarship alone, a view that twentieth century students of orientalism have taken up.[1] But the fact that Gordon Cumming and missionaries such as Moscrop were the first to voice this forces me to question the twentieth-century appropriation of it. Gordon Cumming's construction of Buddhism, in spite of her romantic appreciation of its spirituality, was negative, and her belief in the superiority of European culture, unshakeable. Her view of Vidyodaya College, quoted earlier, was steeped in this. It did not enter her mind that rigorous textual study could have been part of the existing monastic tradition, nor that the main inspiration for the College's innovation could have been indigenous. The writing of scholars such as Devamitta challenges Gordon Cumming's stance and adds complexity to comfortable generalizations about 'The New Buddhism'. In addition, the work of scholars such as Blackburn is now bringing new data to light concerning the form and content of the teaching at Vidyodaya in the nineteenth century. Rather than appropriating Western textual scholarship, she has argued, it pursued an education quite similar to that demanded of a monk at the end of the eighteenth century, albeit with a new examination system. But even this, she suggests, probably drew more from Thailand than the West (Blackburn 2002a,b).

More research needs to be done on South–South exchange during this period. Postcolonial theory has marginalized this, through a myopic concentration on the colonizer/colonized relationship. But nothing could have been more natural than Sri Lankan Buddhists continuing long-established links with their Asian Buddhist neighbours outside the British Empire. Given the history of the monastic Sangha in Sri Lanka, it is almost unthinkable that they would have gone to Western academies for assistance in textual study in preference to other Asian countries. The influence of orientalists such as Rhys Davids was greater among the rising middle class lay Buddhist than among the monastic Sangha.

It was in countering the Christian missionary construction of Buddhism that Sri Lankan revivalists consciously appropriated Western arguments, and this is

where the lines between what was drawn from the West and from the East blur. For I would like to argue that the key to the development of Buddhist modernism in Sri Lanka was not the stereotypical Western orientalist but the need of Buddhists on the ground to counter missionary writing and their discovery that the best strategy was to use the arguments of European contesters of Christianity and to counterbalance each missionary criticism with alternative textual material.

Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalists, therefore, did not simply react against and imitate Christianity, as Bond argues (Bond 1988: 38). They engaged with the Christian construction of Buddhism in a sophisticated way. The main Christian accusations were that Buddhist doctrine was irrational, unscientific and nihilistic, and that its ethics were non-operative. Of necessity, therefore, the defenders of Buddhism had to present Buddhism as scientifically rational and positive, free of superstition and ethically superior. Central within the modernist, revivalist construction of Buddhism, therefore, was Buddhism's non-theistic nature: the absence of a capricious, arbitrary, vengeful power on which human fate depended. In its place, the justice of *kamma*, the Law of Action, and the high moral standards it engendered, were stressed. The Four Noble Truths were privileged as rational and non-metaphysical, and *nibbāna* was presented as a worthy, blissful and possible goal to aspire to. Above all, Buddhism was presented as optimistic, and the Buddha as the greatest of teachers, whose historicity could not be doubted and whose life was unconnected with any form of violence or evil. In addition, there was an attempt to show that Buddhism was equally, if not more, endowed than Christianity with the qualities needed by the emerging capitalist economy of Sri Lanka. Buddhist cosmology, in spite of its link with *Abhidhamma* philosophy, was played down. None of this, except the representation of the Buddha and the downplaying of cosmology, was completely at variance with the Sri Lankan tradition, in its diversity. What was new was the entity created when all the parts were put together in the context of imperialism, socio-economic change and Western scientific rationalism. It is not surprising that Buddhists in Sri Lanka found allies in Western sympathizers of Buddhism, who had a similar agenda.

This was not simply a case of Sri Lankan Buddhists copying Western rationalist approaches. There was a greater mutuality. The West helped in identifying the most useful strategy against Christianity and could point Sri Lankans towards the juiciest irrationalities to attack within the Bible (Young and Somaratne 1996: 138). But, in turn, members of the Sangha could go to their own texts and find there a rational core to be used in defence, a core that Western sympathizers with Buddhism had also discovered to meet their own needs. As the material from the Dutch period and the early nineteenth century shows, Buddhists did not have to look to traditions outside itself to find a lay ethic that combined devotion to the Buddha, devotion to wealth creation and moral striving. To reformulate this in a post-feudal situation in which the laity sought more ownership of Buddhist teaching was not impossible. The 'this worldly asceticism' that has been linked with Protestant Buddhism (Obeyesekere 1979: 306; Kapferer 1983: 22; Bond 1988: 35) was in fact a linear development from earlier centuries. A synchronicity, in fact,

was present between West and East at this time, a meeting of movements and tasks across continental boundaries, in a world where globalizing tendencies were already at work.

The Buddha: a postscript

I have argued that one of the most obvious lines of discontinuity in the nineteenth century passes through the Buddha. Yet, it is too simplistic to picture this as a contest between super human Buddhas and Buddha, the human teacher/hero. New forms of pious devotion to the Buddha arose, overlooked in Bond's sixfold categorization of Protestant Buddhism (Bond 1988: 35).[2] As I have shown, Leadbeater, with his Christian background and scant knowledge of indigenous devotional forms, composed Buddhist hymns to echo those of the Christianity he had left. Revivalist Vesak celebrations were characterized by carols and choirs.[3]

These European manifestations of devotion did not last long, and were rightly met with disdain from veteran revivalists. Their existence, however, spurred other developments, such as the *Bodhi Pūja*, an act of devotion at the Bodhi Tree in the temple precincts. The rise of the *Bodhi Pūja*, however, was combined with the inevitable, well-documented tendency to disparage village practices such as exorcism or to deny their vitality. While the Revival could defiantly affirm devotion to the Buddha, demon and *bali* ceremonies, the target of so much missionary horror, were rejected as indefensible. A.E. Buultjens, a Burgher who converted to Buddhism at the time of the Revival, for instance, came into conflict with the missionaries through the Press when he stressed that the 'female dancers' recorded in the census were linked with Hinduism not Buddhism.[4] As a convert to Buddhism and editor of *The Buddhist* (*TB*) after Leadbeater, he is a good example of the Buddhist modernism that had emerged. But I ask whether his attitude was so very different from those monks who, in response to my Questionnaire Two, in the eighteenth century, insisted that the worship of devils was not permitted in the teaching of the Buddha.

Part V

DISCOURSES OF CONTEMPT

The encounter between Buddhists and Christian missionaries

> They were moved when I said that I came to them [members of the monastic Sangha] as the teachers of the people, feeling sure that if they could be convinced that my Religion was true they would wish to teach it instead of their own. They told me that nothing had more turned them against Christianity than finding themselves treated with marked contempt by its professors.
>
> (Bishop Claughton writing to Rev. E. Hawkins from Colombo, 13 January 1863, Ceylon letters, Vol. II (SPG Archives))

The theme of this part is 'contempt' and its consequences: the contempt that Christian missionaries displayed for Buddhism and the resulting contempt that Buddhists developed for Christianity. The last Part situated 'modernist' Buddhism in the context of Christian misrepresentations of Buddhism. In this Part, I will look at the ground realities of the confrontation between Buddhists and Christians and explore what the consequences were for Buddhism's ongoing relationships with the religious and ethnic 'other'.

20

CO-EXISTENCE AND DUAL BELONGING

During the nineteenth century, Buddhists offered at least five faces to the British missionaries: hospitality and courtesy; willingness to engage in dialogue about religion, and to co-operate if mutual benefit was possible; a polite acceptance and tolerance that sometimes masked distrust or even contempt; the wish for reasoned, structured debate to prove the superiority of Buddhism and direct confrontation and opposition. All were present throughout the century, but in differing degrees. I will argue that the first three were dominant in the early years and the last two, in the later, the shift marking a watershed in the development of Sri Lankan Buddhism.

Malalgoda and Gombrich have pointed to a non-competitive attitude towards 'the other' that was Christianity in the early years of the British period (Malalgoda 1976: 205–31; Gombrich 1988a: 179–80). There is ample evidence in the British writers of this study to support this. To begin with, they noticed the courtesy of the monastic Sangha when foreigners visited their *vihāras*. Percival's experience is typical:

> The injustice of the Portuguese in forcing religious tenets upon them [the Sinhalese] must have shocked them the more as they have not the smallest idea of intolerant zeal. So far are they from being displeased at Europeans, or people of other persuasions entering their temples and observing their ceremonies, that they are rather gratified by such marks of attention, and account the presence of visitors as an honour done themselves.
>
> (Percival 1803: 210)

Spence Hardy was one recipient of this. In his early, more liberal phase, he frequently stayed overnight 'at the pansal' and was always welcomed courteously (Spence Hardy 1850: 312–13; Malalgoda 1976: 211–12). Then, if foreign visitors sought information about Buddhism, members of the monastic Sangha offered time generously. Although Clough and Harvard accused Buddhist monks of prevarication and a reluctance to 'bring their books of any importance to light' (Clough 1816b: 398), it is obvious that some members of the Sangha spent much

time with the two missionaries and courteously shared information with them. And it went further than this. A month after Harvard arrived in Galle, in 1816, he wrote to his parents, 'I have this morning before breakfast, been preaching under the viranda of a Budhist Temple, – at the request of the head Priest, upwards of twenty Priests, in their yellow Robes stood in the congregation.'[1] A similar incident comes from Church Missionary Society (CMS) records.[2]

That this hospitality and generosity was rooted in time-honoured tradition is suggested by Robert Knox, who wrote that the King of Kandy never attempted to force Christians 'to comply with the Countrey's Idolatry' and that both King and people respected and honoured 'the Christians as Christians' (Knox 1681: 83). Buchanan's writing about eighteenth-century Myanmar reveals that this was not restricted to Sri Lanka (Buchanan 1799: 278).[3] And Lorna Dewaraja's study of peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Buddhists in pre-colonial Sri Lanka suggests this generosity of spirit was not restricted to Christians (Dewaraja 1994).

This outward courtesy, in some cases, masked an internal discourse of contempt. Research by Young and Senanayake into Sinhala documents written during the Dutch colonial period has uncovered an encoded narrative tradition within Sri Lankan Buddhism that undermined and ridiculed both Hinduism and Christianity. In one document, Jesus is cast as the son of *Māra*, the Evil One. Born among the Rodiyas, a group marginalized as inferior, he gathers around him those of low caste, drinks toddy, eats meat, steals and terrorizes (Young and Senanayake 1998: 79–93). There can be no doubt that most members of the monastic Sangha in the nineteenth century would have known of these narratives (Young 1997: 179–80). Research by Michael Roberts into a late sixteenth century Sinhala folk story about the Portuguese offers similar evidence of coded resistance to Christianity (Roberts, Raheem and Colin-Thome 1989, I: 2–5). This data reveals that the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition held within it, before the arrival of the British, a strong sense of the heretical and the inimical, and by extension, the doctrinally non-negotiable. However, the weight of evidence supporting courtesy, accommodation and openness within the monastic Sangha towards the missionaries, at the beginning of the British period is simply too strong to be dismissed. It would be as wrong as it would be offensive to imply that it was duplicitous.

In this context, the experience of the early Methodist missionaries is revealing. If courtesy was the key word to describe the early attitude of the monastic Sangha, curiosity and the wish for entertainment were keys to the attitude of the laity. Thomas Squance, writing from Galle in 1815, asserts that 2,000 came to hear him preach in an open field (Squance 1816b: 154) and that in the bazaars people would lay aside their business 'to listen with great attention' (Squance 1816d: 278). Benjamin Clough, in the same year, claims a large number of pilgrims at Kelaniya heard him speak, giving the impression that they agreed with his condemnation of transmigration (Clough 1816a: 197). Thomas Erskine speaks of 'multitudes' convening to listen in rural villages (Erskine 1817: 197).

Similar reports come from the CMS to form a striking consensus. For instance, Robert Mayor, one of the first CMS missionaries, claims soon after arrival that he

preached, at '*Telleegodda*', to a hundred attentive listeners, who asked him to come again (Mayor 1819: 342).[4] He also comments on the intelligence of the people's questions.

An initial euphoria can be sensed in these early reports, and they are sufficiently close to the beginnings of evangelical missionary work for rhetoric contrived to meet Western expectations to be minimal. Yet, euphoria is soon replaced by bafflement as it dawned on the missionaries that willingness to listen, even apparent readiness to agree, did not mean that Buddhism would be rejected and Christianity embraced, and certainly did not mean that those Buddhists who had been officially 'baptized' under the Dutch would return to the Christian fold (Mayor 1819: 342). Missionary records soon overflowed with two complaints: that Sri Lankan Buddhists saw no incompatibility between endorsing Christian tenets and retaining their Buddhist identity and that even those who seemed to convert to Christianity remained, 'Buddhists in heart'.[5] As Spence Hardy retrospectively claimed, Sri Lankan lay people did not see 'culpable inconsistency' (Spence Hardy 1865: 36–7) in professing themselves both Christian and Buddhist.

An apparent inability to see Buddhism and Christianity as mutually exclusive at all levels was also mirrored in the favours some members of the monastic Sangha asked of the missionaries and the co-operation they expected. Harvard was asked by one monk to use his influence with the Government, 'that he [the monk] might thereby be appointed to the headship of all the priests in the island' (Spence Hardy 1865: 37). Others expected to be granted use of Christian printing presses or to preach at mission stations. According to the missionaries, they found it difficult to understand why they were refused (Spence Hardy 1850: 313; Jobson 1862: 207).

The missionaries were offered a number of justifications for this non-competitive attitude. One was typified by the Buddhist monk who said to Selkirk in 1827, 'that English people worshipped Jesus Christ, and that Singhalese people worshipped Budha, that they were both good religions, and would both take those that professed them to heaven at last' (Selkirk 1844: 379), and another by the boy who declared to Rev. T. Daniel that the way to resolve the question of whether to worship God or Buddha was to worship both (Anon. 1844: 267). The non-exclusivity of these dumbfounded some missionaries.

There was a twist, however, to this non-exclusivity and it was Spence Hardy who hit the nail on the head:

> They would have been willing to enter into an alliance with the servants of God, and would have had no hesitation in worshipping Jesus Christ, if they [the missionaries] would have worshipped Buddha. According to their ideas, Jesus Christ was a good man, as Buddha was a good man; and if Buddha was only regarded as the best, what should hinder the formation of a compact between the two systems, that would have brought the whole of the Sinhalese people under one religious rule?
>
> (Spence Hardy 1865: 286)

In other words, the playing field was not equal for Sri Lankan Buddhists. Spence Hardy, of course, glimpsed here one of Buddhism's central motifs. As Buddhism spread south, north and east from India, it did not invite allegiance by condemning the religiousness it encountered, but by demoting, reinterpreting or absorbing it into itself within a pantheon that placed the Buddha at the top. What has been variously termed cosmic religiosity, spirit religion or worship of the gods remained, but within a Buddhist framework. If the ultimacy of the Buddha is recognized, Buddhism, throughout its history, has been willing to accommodate and even absorb into itself other ways of being religious. The field of spiritual benefit has not been exclusive of the 'non-Buddhist'.

There is clear evidence that this tradition of accommodation, expressed in the early nineteenth century as a willingness to listen to the missionaries, or to hold their teaching alongside a privileged Buddhism, persisted among some Buddhists throughout the century. Bishop James Chapman, in a letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in May 1846, was able to state that Buddhists in Badulla were subscribing to build a Christian Church.[6] In 1880, a Sri Lankan clergyman supported by SPG could state euphorically that 8,100 'heathen' listened in one spot to his bazaar–preaching,[7] and Copleston, that Christians could be sure of a good hearing (Copleston 1880: 4). Mary Langdon remarks even later than this that her work in Kandy with destitute girls had been praised by Buddhists in a Buddhist newspaper (M. Langdon 1887: 417). Also, complaints that Sinhala people saw nothing wrong in double belonging persisted. For instance, Rev. I. Wood, writing from Cotta in the late 1850s, could still say that most Sri Lankans in the vicinity believed that being half Christian and half Buddhist was far better than being either decidedly Christian or Buddhist.[8]

For many Buddhists, however, time-tested attitudes rooted in Buddhist tradition changed. These words of C.B. Dunuwille, chief lay custodian of the sacred tooth relic in Kandy, when he was challenged with having attended a Christian Church, admirably illustrate the transition:

> Our religion is not exclusive. We consider it no sin to attend Christian worship. All that I heard at your church was good. Probably I should go there often, but I could not do so in my present position without incurring the reproach from my countrymen, that I was a Christian and not a Buddhist, and therefore unfit for my office.
>
> (Gregory 1894: 287)

21

WORLD VIEWS IN COLLISION

Risking simplification, the change came about because of a collision of world views. For the early evangelical missionaries, encounter between faiths was about confrontation between mutually exclusive truth claims. To search for the holy in the religious 'other' or to subordinate doctrinal differences for the sake of harmony were simply not on their agenda. The message they carried – humanity's sinfulness, the need for repentance and God's saving grace through Jesus Christ – held within it, they believed, an absolute imperative to reject any alternative world view.

When they met courtesy, rather than the competition they expected, some, therefore, simply attributed it to hypocrisy nurtured in the Dutch period. This had some justification. During Dutch domination many Buddhists had undergone Christian baptism to gain government employment or recognition. But they had not stopped going to the Buddhist or Hindu temple, and the Dutch authorities had turned a blind eye, more concerned about trading profits than enforcing exclusivist patterns of religious belonging. Such baptism, in fact, was seen by Sri Lankans as a civil rather than a religious act, necessary for their mundane comfort under imperial domination (Young and Somaratne 1996: 61). The result was a form of double religious belonging, in which Buddhism or Hinduism remained primary. An assumption that the new imperialists might expect a similar double belonging could have lain behind some early attitudes. It was not hypocrisy but pragmatism.

Others attributed it to the weakness of Sri Lankan Buddhism.[1] Spence Hardy, recipient of so much hospitality, blamed indolence, indifference, overconfidence in the truth of their own system (Spence Hardy 1850: 313) or the fact that 'all violent opposition, even to error, would be contrary to the precepts' (Spence Hardy 1850: 412). Gogerly perhaps came closest to the traditional 'motif' mentioned earlier: 'The supremacy of wisdom and virtue being the governing principle of Buddhism, the adherents of that faith regard with reverence the teachers of other religions, especially if their ceremonial does not require the taking of life' (Bishop 1908, I: 4).

Few missionaries could see that the attitudes they encountered spoke of a sophisticated understanding of what interreligious co-existence might require, or

that Sri Lankan Buddhists had a refined sense of Truth and a developed ability to argue against 'error', given the right provocation.

Records of early dialogues between missionary and monk are a significant pointer to the dynamic that developed. I will give two examples. The first is a description of a conversation between the Methodist missionary, Thomas Erskine, and a Buddhist monk in Belligama, in 1816. According to Erskine, the monk began confidently by answering questions concerning the five precepts. His tone changed, however, when Erskine suggested that Buddhism might be false. 'We are forbid to examine any other religion', he rejoined and then withdrew for his daily meal (Erskine 1817: 198). The second comes from the Anglican, Samuel Lambrick (1768–1854), who records this of one conversation with a monk:

> I found that he was for an intercommunity of Religions – that he was, in fact, of the same opinion as some of our own worldly-wise people at home, who think that every man may be saved, if he is sincere in the Religion which he professes. He appears, comparatively, shy of my company, since I told him that our God allowed of no rival – that if our Sacred Book was right, his must be wrong, and his worship of the Budhu sinful and abominable – and that, on the contrary, if he or any of his Sacred Books was in any degree or measure right, ours were all false, and a fabrication from beginning to end.
>
> (*CMS Report* 1819–1820: 192–3)

These missionary recollections, albeit selective, reveal a genuine wish on the part of Buddhist monks for courteous, intelligent conversation.[2] Did the monks hope for a reciprocal courtesy? Most probably. But they were disappointed. Their worst fear was confirmed: that the missionaries wanted to learn of Buddhism only to undermine it,[3] a fear reinforced when tracts such as Benjamin Clough's 'Reasons why I am NOT a Buddhist' appeared in 1826.

That this should result in the monastic Sangha modifying their behavioural ethic was, in retrospect, inevitable. Without doubt, objections to Christian belief were present from the beginning, in a direct line from the Dutch and Portuguese periods, and missionary records hint at this.[4] The monastic Sangha were never so naïve as to project all that was good onto Christianity. Objection to belief, however, did not lead to a retreat from courtesy. It was the experience of contempt that did and also the possibility of threat to the *dhamma*. For those members of the monastic Sangha who had extended courtesy to the missionaries, offered them teaching, given them hospitality, even procured for them accurate religious manuscripts, the discourse of contempt they then received was no less than a betrayal of their self-understanding, causing indignation, affront and what Young has called 'beleaguerment' (Young 1997: 166). So another view moved from the periphery towards the centre: that Christian–Buddhist enmity had been cosmically ordained (Young and Somaratne 1996: 49).

To go by missionary records, there were some acts of opposition to Christianity in the Dutch period, Spence Hardy, for instance, mentioning opposition to Christian education by parents in the Galle District (Spence Hardy 1865: 206). In the British period, opposition arose soon after the arrival of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionaries. An incident involving Benjamin Clough at Kelaniya Mahā Vihāraya, a Buddhist place of pilgrimage near Colombo, in May 1815, at Vesak, is a most interesting example. I shall use Clough's account of it (Clough 1816a). The trigger was some aggressive preaching by Clough to a typical crowd of curious lay people near the temple. The monks were divided in their response. One sent a message that 'he would hold a public dispute' with Clough, 'in the open air, in the presence of the people, to prove that the religion of Budhu was superior to every other religion in the world' (Clough 1816a: 198). Clough returned to the temple expecting this, but the monk was nowhere to be found and, according to Clough, 'none of the other priests would enter into the subject'. Therefore Clough continued with his preaching. The result was, 'The priests were so much displeased that they drew up a petition, and presented it to his excellency the Governor, stating, how they had been disturbed and abused by us.'

The early response of the monastic Sangha to missionary methods such as confrontational preaching and the handing out of tracts was not uniform. A wish to withdraw was one response. Another, seen at Kelaniya, was to call for a debate to defeat 'the other', a response that, to my knowledge, was not realized until the 1860s. The response that initially gained most support was to appeal to the government in the assumption that any right-thinking administration would agree that it was wrong for people of one religion to abuse those of another. Malalgoda is wrong to state that such petitions began only in the 1820s but he gives a useful description of their content: that religious tolerance should be upheld and that literature calculated to offend any religious group should be banned (Malalgoda 1976: 213–14). Such petitions were sent by both lay and ordained groups.[5]

The petitions hung on the belief that an appeal to reason would lead to the enforcing of a co-existence model of inter-religious relations rooted in tolerance. According to Clough, however, the 1815 appeal was ignored by the Governor. Two more were sent but it was reprimand not endorsement that eventually came (Clough 1816a: 199). Only in isolated cases were missionaries advised to be cautious. Malalgoda cites two, in 1833 and 1852, after the era of petitions had ended (Malalgoda 1976: 214). One of the earliest I have come across was in 1826 when a circular letter was sent to missionaries condemning material, 'casting scoffs and offensive reflections on the Buddhist religion' and saying its circulation would not be tolerated (Oakley 1880: 322).[6]

22

BETRAYAL AND RETALIATION

When reason failed, it was inevitable that other methods should be tried. Spence Hardy claimed that Buddhist priests began to take alarm by 1826 (Spence Hardy 1865: 286–7), but his estimate is conservative. The 1819 *School Report for the Methodist Mission* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo) (*SR*) claimed that Buddhism was attempting to re-establish itself in several parts of the South (*SR* 1819: 199). And Browning, CMS missionary in Kandy, heard in the early 1820s that Buddhist monks were persuading the people not to support a missionary school. He commented, 'This is almost the first instance wherein the influence of the Priests operating against us has absolutely come under my notice.'[1] The CMS Reports that followed, however, reveal mounting evidence of resistance – in the laity to Christian teaching and within the monastic Sangha, to reduce missionary influence.[2] Selkirk reported in 1830, 'There is one thing which I perceive from my visits to and conversations with the people: they are in a state of greater excitement than ever I knew them before. They become angry and impatient when they are told by us that they are sinners, that their idolatry will not profit them, or that it is wrong to live without considering what they are doing, or whither they are going' (Selkirk 1844: 352). Then, at a Buddhist festival in 1833, he found that Christian tracts were eagerly taken from the missionaries, not out of interest, but at the urging of a Buddhist monk who wanted to burn them. Selkirk explains that some tracts were torn in front of their eyes, others were stuck in trees, while some were destined to become wadding for guns (Selkirk 1844: 419).[3]

There is evidence, therefore, that as early as 1820 some Buddhists were proactively resisting missionary activity. Temple unity was sometimes threatened as this report of an incident in 1829 shows:

> The priests in general attended to what was said pretty quietly, but one or two were so much exasperated that I really thought they would set upon us. It may be seen they went pretty far when I say, that fists were doubled in the face of the interpreter who was with me, and that their voice was so loud and attitude so menacing, that people came from a distance to see what was the matter . . . The other priests wished to go

> away when they saw things in this state; and soon found an excuse for doing so.
>
> (Selkirk 1844: 395)

By the 1830s, some monks were also replying to the missionaries in what Young and Somaratne have termed ‘a profusion of olas’: treatises written on palm leaves, carried from village to village (Young and Somaratne 1996: 66). These were defensive works of apologetic, reasoned rather than abusive, engaging with missionary arguments. Some sought to contrast Buddhism with Christianity, but Young and Somaratne cite one that shows common ground could also be sought in ‘defensive tolerance’ (Young and Somaratne 1996: 71–2).

The next significant development was Daniel Gogerly’s 1848 publication, *Kristiyāni Prajñapti* (The Evidences and Doctrines of the Christian Religion). Young and Somaratne have analysed its content and I will not repeat this (Young and Somaratne 1996: 79–111). It is the effect of the document that is important here. According to Malalgoda, the document’s polemic used tools of rational doctrinal controversy to which the Sangha were accustomed. This, he claims, was what made the monastic Sangha rise to its challenge (Malalgoda 1976: 217–18). Young and Somaratne, in contrast, liken its impact on Sri Lankan Buddhists to the outcry of British Muslims against Salman Rushdie’s book, *The Satanic Verses*, emphasizing the blasphemy factor rather than its method (Young and Somaratne 1996: 88). I see both elements as important. *Kristiyāni Prajñapti* both called the monastic Sangha to account for not teaching ‘pure’ Buddhism and undermined that very Buddhism through closely argued philology.

After *Kristiyāni Prajñapti*, the confrontation between Buddhism and Christianity in Sri Lanka moved into another, more urgent key. New Buddhist leaders arose, with two gaining prominence, Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda and Hikkaḍuvē Sumaṁgala, the former founding in 1862 the Sarvajnña Sāsanābhivṛddhidāyaka Dharma Samāgama translated as ‘Society for the Propagation of Buddhism’ (Malalgoda 1976: 220).

In the 1850s some missionaries could still send reports home of Buddhism becoming weaker.[4] By the 1860s, few dared to do this. Typical would be the CMS worker who spoke of, ‘the great Buddhistical movement lately made in our towns and villages, threatening to annihilate Christianity in Ceylon’[5] or the claim from Baddegama in the south that quiet hearings had passed and that missionaries were preaching, ‘in the midst of contention and disputing’, sometimes in the face of abuse.[6] Tract was, by this time, following tract, and periodical, periodical as members of the monastic Sangha made full use of the printing presses they had acquired in 1855 and 1862 (Malalgoda 1976: 219–21). Also, local action was taking place, the establishing of village ‘courts’, for instance, to hear cases of ‘disaffection to Buddhism’ and ‘any inclination to Christianity’.[7]

Lay people were inevitably drawn into this growing ferment. Occasionally, a pragmatic assessment of the value of Christian schools could lead lay Buddhists to oppose members of the monastic Sangha who wished their closure.[8] Generally speaking, however, by the 1860s, both lay and ordained were on high alert.

Converts to Christianity

A further cause of 'beleaguerment' for Sri Lankan Buddhists were the actions of those who converted. As I have shown, the missionaries sought to implant in converts an ethic of 'no compromise' towards Buddhism. It was an uphill task but success eventually came. Children from missionary schools internalized the message first, as this disturbing cameo suggests:

> The children in the classes at Pantura and Wekadda in particular give us increasing hopes of their future usefulness. Even now they boldly oppose their idolatrous parents whenever they call them to go to their heathenish worship and feasts and occasionally some of them talk to their parents respecting the folly and sinfulness of these things. In one instance, a boy of the Pantura class had the courage to speak against idolatry so openly as to cause a great disturbance among the priests of the Pantura temple.
>
> (Handwritten District Minute Book, Methodist District of South Ceylon 1831–1871: 15 (Methodist Headquarters, Colombo))[9]

Success with adults came later[10] and it led to constructions of Buddhism by Sri Lankan Christians that echoed and even sought to outdo the missionaries. The following was not written by a missionary but by a convert in the 1860s, 'The huge and hoary system of Gautama having the same influence here as in other countries, the masses of the inhabitants seem dead in worldly mindedness, licentiousness, and gross superstition, and are almost past feeling.'[11]

By the time of the Panadura Debate in 1873, the Methodist Church was confident enough to field a convert as their main protagonist, Rev. David de Silva. The criticisms he made of Buddhism were fundamentally those of Daniel Gogerly. For Buddhists, this was just one more piece in the ever more alarming picture of Christianity as threat.

From an attitude of tolerance, even welcome, and from a wish for religious co-existence, even for mutually beneficial dialogue, a spirit of retaliation against those who openly declared they wished to destroy Buddhism, therefore, developed among Sri Lankan Buddhists, lay and ordained. The experiences that led to this had a seismic quality. And the shift in attitude towards the religious 'other' that accompanied it was also seismic. It is too simplistic to say that this was a shift from inclusivism to exclusivism. Such a typology belongs to twentieth-century Christian discourse not to nineteenth-century Buddhism. There were both inclusive-like and exclusive-like orientations within Buddhism at the beginning of the British period. Debate and polemic, for instance, are near neighbours and there is evidence that some monks sought such debate early on – an exclusive tendency. By the middle of the century, however, the balance between the exclusive-like and the inclusive-like had changed, the former gaining the upper hand. This shift had more to do with a shrivelling of a co-existence model of dealing with

religious difference than with 'theologies' of difference. In other words, more important than differences in belief were questions concerning acceptable levels of confrontation in the face of threat to the *dhamma*.

As I have already stressed, this did not mean that the wish for tolerant co-existence, even co-operation, died completely. In many rural villages, Buddhists and Christians co-existed more or less peacefully, and Christians who sought courteous and respectful dialogue with Buddhists received courtesy in return. For instance, George Turnour was able to refer to his constant, fulfilling conversation with Buddhist monks, an 'almost daily intercourse' at some points (Turnour 1836: lxxxiv, cx). He could praise the monks for their tact, taste and 'unreserved communicativeness' (Turnour 1836: lxxxv) and records the 'admirable dexterity in avoiding the approach to obnoxious or debateable topics' shown by one group of monks in the presence of the Bishop of Calcutta (Turnour 1836: lxxxv). Childers' experience can be cited in the middle years of the century and Dickson's, in the later decades. And, on another tack, the revivalists did not always succeed in persuading Buddhists to give to the new Buddhist schools. In the 1890s, Dr Bowles Daly, Head of Mahinda College, Galle, founded in 1880, resigned because of the disappointing response to fund-raising efforts (D.H. Gunewardene 1973: 13–14), although this could have been due to his personality rather than the school.[12]

The early tolerance of Sri Lankan Buddhists was not lost, but it was overshadowed by the rhetoric of confrontation and mistrust, fuelled both by a sense of betrayal and genuine indignation at the disrespect shown by the missionaries to the Buddha and his devotees.

Buddhist revival and revitalization

Moscrop, speaking in 1894 in Birmingham[13] declared, 'During my time in Ceylon, there has been a certain movement which has helped to purify our Christianity, and which is a striking tribute to our methods and success.' He gave examples of the 'sundry accidentals of our Church life' which the Buddhists had copied such as carols, catechisms and Sunday Schools, and continued,

> You have already made the inference, Buddhism is alive; but have you made the further inference, drawn by us on the field, that it is alive because Christianity has proved itself to be alive; that it has felt our grip and become alarmed, aggressive?
>
> (Moscrop 1894: 286)

Moscrop and other late nineteenth century Christian missionaries would probably have greeted Obeyesekere's term, 'Protestant Buddhism', with a wry smile of recognition for their own observations mirrored those of twentieth-century anthropologists. As I have shown, Bechert, Ludowyk, Gombrich, Obeyesekere, Hallisey and Lopez were not the first to notice that the Buddhist Revival drew on Christianity, or that a Buddhism different from that which had been traditionally

practised was emerging in Sri Lanka and the West. That privilege must go to the nineteenth-century missionaries, who then made the further claim that the Revival could be attributed to their own missionary activity.

Some missionaries, therefore, welcomed Buddhist revivalism because it was easier to deal with than the 'indifference' they had previously bemoaned. Ewing, a Baptist, rejoices that the Revival aroused people from apathy (Ewing 1912: 14) and the Methodist District Meeting for South Ceylon could report in 1882 that the 'bitter opposition' of Buddhists was a good sign, 'showing that the old period of patronizing Christianity for worldly gain and secular position is passing away'.[14]

What the missionaries were, in fact, applauding was that Buddhists had robustly and consciously appropriated for their own gain the exclusivism of the missionaries and the hermeneutical weapon of literalism. The period of Christian – Buddhist debates in the 1860s and 1870s is a good illustration of this.

The first debate to receive publicity was at Baddegama, a CMS stronghold, in 1865. Others followed at Varagoda, 1867, Udanvita and Gampola, before Panadura in 1873. In spite of the situation of 'high alert', the missionaries were unprepared for the seriousness of their Buddhist partners and the tension the debates would generate. In Baddegama, they had not even expected the monks to turn up. When they did, according to one Methodist witness, they objected to whatever procedure the missionaries proposed, before insisting on a written formula, and feelings rose so high that the debate was terminated by Justices of the Peace after 4–5 days to prevent a breach of the peace.[15] At Varagoda, the Christians were pelted (Carter 1868: 56). However, in general terms, the debates offered a positive model of confrontation, oral rather than physical, ordered rather than spontaneous. The Panadura Debate particularly seems to have been outwardly peaceful, as Langdon, fresh from Britain, recorded:

> So ended this remarkable discussion. The people in the outer circle of the crowd who for the most part could not hear, raised a shout of applause, crying 'sadu! sadu!' but beyond that there was no demonstration or disturbance whatever, and that was to me the surprising thing about it. I question if a controversy of that kind could be held in the presence of so many thousands in any country in Europe without some disturbance.
>
> (*QL*), No.LXXXII, September 1873, from S. Langdon, Colpetty: 196–201, here p. 201)

At Panadura, Buddhists claimed victory, although not all Christians agreed with them.[16] Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda, the main Buddhist contender, had done his research well. Appealing meticulously to the letter of Christian scriptures – that Moses was a murderer, that the birth of Jesus was accompanied by the culling of children – he accused Christians of worshipping a jealous, capricious, violent and demon-like god, linking Jehovah and Jesus to the world of the demonic, just as the discourse of contempt in the Dutch period had done (Peebles 1994: 67–8, 92, 122).

The structure of the Debate played into Guṇānanda's hands. In effect, each speaker was given the task of arguing why the other religion was false rather than why his own was true (Peebles 1994: 35). Exegesis of the speakers' religion entered only as they responded to the points made by the other. David de Silva, therefore, attacked Buddhism through Gogerly's construction of *anattā* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Guṇānanda was constrained to reply to this. Accusing De Silva of inadequate scholarship, he insisted that, although Buddhism had no concept of an immortal human soul, the being who was reborn was not another but the very same being who died (Peebles 1994: 55–62). And in reply to the accusation that *paṭiccasamuppāda* was irrational, Guṇānanda reversed the charge.

The Panadura Debate is significant because it shows that the literalism used by missionaries such as Gogerly in approaching the Theravāda texts could be robustly thrown back into the Christian court with devastating effect. The perceived Buddhist victory at Panadura was more than a debating triumph. It gave back dignity and identity to the Buddhist spectators. It is remembered to the present. On 24 August 2003, a commemorative public rally was held in Sri Lanka to mark its one hundred and thirtieth anniversary and a postage stamp issued.[17] However regrettable the move towards confrontation, however narrow and sterile the literalist approach may seem now, within the nineteenth-century context, the Debates were not 'Vain' as Young and Somaratne's title implies (Young and Somaratne 1996). They showed that Buddhists could effectively challenge 'the other' using the very weapons that had been directed at them.

Westerners who travelled to Sri Lanka after 1873 in solidarity with Buddhists developed rather than created these strategies. Some resisted literalist methods of undermining Christianity, opting for broader brush strokes. Some made a distinction between the compassionate message of Jesus and the bellicose attitude of the missionaries. Others called for reasoned dialogue. But, in the end, they came up with a similar product. A theosophist, for instance, writing in *The Buddhist* (*TB)* under the pseudonym, Philalethes, had no reservation in referring to the 'fair name' of Jesus (Philalethes (b) 1891: 49). But his conclusion was this:

> The very streams of human blood in the onward march of Christianity testify to its barbarous origin. Do not the savage and inhuman scenes depicted in the Old Testament speak for themselves? It is no exaggeration to say that a publisher of a book, nowadays, so low in its moral tone as that which some chapters of the Old Testament exhibit, will be liable to criminal prosecution.
>
> (Philalethes (b) 1891: 99)

Similarly, Leadbeater could praise Archdeacon Farrar, a Christian, for his insight (Leadbeater 1889i: 283) and could appeal for dialogue when criticizing the editor of *The Observer* for misrepresenting Buddhism.[18] Yet, his attack on Christianity was harsh. Christianity was unscientific, needing the Buddha to grasp the truths lying within it (Leadbeater 1889m). It was part of the superstition and fetishism

of the world (Leadbeater 1889h: 273–4). Its morals were questionable.[19] Of the Christianity he saw in the missionaries, he wrote:

> It cannot live in peace with any other form of faith. It holds that there is but one saviour, but one inspired book, and but one little narrow grass-grown path that leads to heaven. Such a religion is necessarily uncompromising, unreasoning, aggressive and insolent. It has held all other creeds and forms in infinite contempt, divided the world into enemies and friends and amply verified that awful declaration of its founder; 'I came not to send peace on earth but a sword'.
>
> (Leadbeater 1889n: 173–4)

The Anagārika Dharmapāla, a key figure in the later decades of the Buddhist Revival, caught the Western preference for the broad brush stroke, but his method was the same as Guṇānanda's at Panadura:

> A religion which kills individuality, that holds up prayer instead of action, that speaks of a heaven hereafter, making life here pessimistic, that breaks down social sympathies, that speaks of eternal damnation, that knows of no redemption for the sinners – such a religion is unsuited for a civilised Aryan community.
>
> (Guruge 1965: 400)

Needless to say, the 'Protestant' Buddhism he constructed was exactly the opposite, in line with my argument in part 4:

> Higher Buddhism is pure science. It has no place for theology, and it has got nothing to do with creator gods and fighting lords. It rejects the phantom of a separate soul entity residing somewhere in the body. It rejects a saviour by whose favour one can go to heaven, it rejects the superstitions of an eternal hell and an eternal heaven, it rejects the idea of prayer to bribe the god, and it repudiates the interference of priests.
>
> (Guruge 1965: 658)

23

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Acrimony between Buddhists and Christians continued into the twentieth century influencing the polity of the country and has not yet died. In evaluating the extent of this influence, two questions are critical: Did the Buddhist Revival and the Buddhist – Christian animosity it nurtured influence the nationalism that led to independence from the British in 1948? And did it influence the Sinhala nationalism that contributed to ethnic war in the second half of the twentieth century?

Sri Lankan national consciousness

Several historians have attempted to trace a continuous line between the Buddhist Revival and twentieth-century Sri Lankan national consciousness. For instance, K.M. de Silva has argued that religious nationalism preceded and spurred political nationalism in the country (K.M. De Silva 1979: 145), citing, for example, the early twentieth century Temperance Movement. In contrast, John Rogers and Michael Roberts, while not denying that Buddhist revivalism fed into the Temperance Movement and national consciousness, have pointed to the non-Buddhists who appeared on the Movement's platforms such as Ponnambalam Ramanathan, Tamil, Sinhala Christians and British missionaries (Rogers *et al.* 1989: 335–6) and to the Sinhala Christians who identified with Sinhala cultural awakening (Roberts *et al.* 1989: 55–6). Their data suggests that the consciousness nurtured by the Buddhist Revival must be distinguished both from the growth of Sinhala consciousness and the growth of national consciousness. The Buddhist Revival was essentially sectarian rather than national, and anti-Christian rather than anti-British. For instance, it drew much on Western anti-Christian arguments but was flattered when British Governors appeared to honour Buddhism.[1]

The sectarian nature of the revivalist consciousness is illustrated in a strand of literature that cast Christians not only as adherents of a debased religion but also as anti-national. Piyadasa Sirisena's novels can be taken as illustration. Sirisena was born Pedrick de Silva, but changed his name under the influence of the Anagārika Dharmapāla. By 1903, he was editing *Sinhala Jatiya* (The Sinhala Nation) and by 1906, Dharmapala's *Sinhala Bauddhaya* (The Sinhala Buddhist).

One of his most popular works *Jayatissa saha Rosalin* (Jayatissa and Rosalin) was a parody of contemporary Christian novels. Jayatissa, Buddhist and spokesperson for Sinhala Buddhist identity, falls in love with Rosalin, Roman Catholic. Through rational argument, Jayatissa converts Rosalin's parents to Buddhism. Rosalin, however, is abducted by a non-amenable Catholic who wishes to marry her. Only after many adventures are the two original lovers reunited.[2] Two types of Roman Catholic are therefore offered: those who can respond to Buddhism's rationality and those who cannot, the latter linked with love of Western practices, criminality and the anti-national. Secondary resistance to the West can be seen but the resistance has a rather narrow expression.

To posit a direct link between the Buddhist Revival and the growth of the political nationalism that led to independence, therefore, can only be attempted with caution. There can be no doubt that the Revival gave a cultural and religious self-confidence to Sinhala Buddhists that prepared them for political self-assertion. And it exposed them to methods of community mobilization that could be transferred to the world of political self-expression. Yet, it could not provide the vision necessary for a political mobilization that transcended ethnicity and religion. That was left to an elite drawn from the English-speaking Tamil and Sinhala communities.

The legacy of the Buddhist Revival, I would like to suggest, fed into another form of nationalism: Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Independence was gained in 1948 without violence. One clause of the constitution that came with independence was that no law enacted by Parliament could 'make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not liable; or confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions'.[3] It was this clause that enabled the Prime Minister to form a Cabinet comprised of both Sinhala and Tamil politicians in a situation where communal politics had already raised its head (Russell 1982). Religious and ethnic sectarianism was suppressed in independence optimism and the shared English-speaking culture of those in power.

This was not to last. In the 1950s, a Sinhala Buddhist nationalism that demanded the recognition of Buddhism and the Sinhala language and culture grew in the south of the country. It was a popular, postcolonial protest against the hegemony of English and the apparently disproportionate percentage of Tamils in positions of power. I would argue that it was this movement that was influenced and strengthened by the legacy of the Revival, particularly by what Obeyesekere has identified as 'reaction formation or overcompensation' (Obeyesekere 1970: 49) – the wish to compensate for what Buddhism was seen to have suffered under colonialism. The strength of the movement led to a massive electoral victory in 1956 for a party that appealed to this nationalism. One of the new government's first pieces of legislation under the Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was an Official Language Act dubbed the Sinhala Only Act that made Sinhala the national language. The result was that the Tamil-speaking quarter of the population was linguistically crippled, violating the constitution in the eyes of many Tamils.

Coupled with legislation such as this were pledges from the Prime Minister that Buddhism would again enjoy its pre-colonial status. The national press became quick to report anything – speeches, reports, policy documents – that spoke of Buddhism being given its 'rightful place', or being made the national religion.[4] Reading through the Buddhism files from the 1950s and 1960s in the newspaper archives at Lake House in Colombo, I wrote in the margin of my notes, 'The monastic Sangha always seems to need some conspiracy threat whether it is the Catholics, the coalition government or the British.' That was the impression the clippings selected by the archivist gave, through headlines such as 'Buddhists enemy in their own homes';[5] 'Bhikkhu on Buddhists and their Rights';[6] 'State aid sought for Buddhism: only way to save the faith';[7] 'Ceylon's Survival Depends on Buddhism – Thero';[8] and 'Buddhists asked to "remain vigilant".'[9] My note was non-academic but it rightly captured one strand of Buddhist thought in post-independence Sri Lanka: a defensive vigilance in the face of perceived threats to the *dhamma* that had roots in the nineteenth century. It caused one Prime Minister, in 1963, to appeal for tolerance, urging Buddhists not to create ill- feelings by implying that Buddhism could only be saved 'by getting rid of those who believed in other faiths.'[10]

Many Sinhala Buddhists with whom I have spoken in the last two decades have admitted that the 'Sinhala Only Act' was a mistake. However understandable as a postcolonial reaction to a Westernized governing elite, when combined with government rhetoric concerning the restoration of Buddhism and the 'defensive vigilance' I have outlined earlier, it had disastrous consequences. For it set in motion a chain of events that resulted in the Tamil people losing confidence in the national government, predetermined by the country's majoritarian parliamentary structure to be Sinhala-dominated. At first, Tamil demands for differing forms of regional autonomy for the North and East, where most Tamils lived, were peaceful and constitutional. Eventually, in the 1970s, militant youth groups emerged, demanding a separate state, Tamil Eelam. By 1979, the situation had become so serious that a draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed.[11]

Three 'Eelam Wars' followed. One Tamil group gained dominance, through decimating its rivals, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Several rounds of peace talks were held but all broke down. All communities suffered – Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim. Upwards of 60,000 people died and at least a million people were internally displaced. The Sinhala people found themselves the victims of vicious suicide bombings directed at civilians and religious centres. Tamils 'disappeared' in army custody and had their churches, temples, schools and houses bombed by their own government. And one factor in the intractability of the conflict remained a Sinhala Buddhist lobby that supported war to annihilate the LTTE in a refusal to accommodate the idea of substantial devolution of power to Tamil-majority areas.

I would not want to argue for a direct causal line from the Buddhist Revival to this lobby. Many Buddhists who applaud the spirited, anti-missionary resistance of the Revival are not opposed to a negotiated settlement of the ethnic issue. However, at a subliminal level, there is a remarkable parallel between the attitudes that were present in the Revival towards the Christian 'other' and the attitudes that

have been expressed towards the LTTE 'other' in the twentieth century. It is as though there has been a replay of emotions, in a different context. I explored this in a paper given to an international conference some years ago (Harris 2001).[12] Key to this discourse replay, I argued, were the concepts of threat, humiliation and betrayal. The claim of Sinhala movements that have opposed substantial devolution of power through negotiation has been that the Sinhala people are the victims of injustice, humiliation and betrayal at the hands of the Tamil people, national politicians and foreign interests. Just as the nineteenth-century Christian missionaries were cast as betrayers of the trust, hospitality and tolerance of the Sinhala Buddhist people, so the LTTE has been cast, in the more recent past, as betrayer of the historical and demographic rights of the Sinhala people, as well as their goodwill. As I wrote in 2001, 'Each action taken by the Tamil community to draw attention to their need for more control over their own affairs within a democratic framework has been taken by these groups as a humiliating attack on the self-definition of the Sinhala people, amounting to betrayal' (Harris 2001: 214). I did not then know of Part II of the report of the Sinhala Commission, which illustrates this mindset. Dismissing as a 'big lie' Tamil claims that they are oppressed and attributing the growth of terrorism to British colonialism, it accuses foreign funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of being LTTE propagandists, 'fifth columnists under a hidden agenda' (The National Joint Committee 2001: ix–x, 92).

The missionary construction of Buddhism and the proselytizing strategies that accompanied it were rightly countered in the nineteenth century and the integrity of Sinhala Buddhists defended. And in the twentieth century, the struggle to re-possess Sinhala culture in a postcolonial situation was a necessary struggle. But the accompanying emergence of a 'nineteenth century' emotive dynamic charged with convictions of victimhood and betrayal has made some Sinhala people unable to understand the effect on the Tamil people either of the upsurge of Sinhala national consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s or the violent repression of Tamils, seen most poignantly in the 1983 anti-Tamil programme.

Buddhist–Christian enmity

On 20 January 1995, Pope John Paul II was due to arrive in Sri Lanka for a 25-hour visit. Plans were going well. The State was committed to spending 130 million rupees on it (at that time, about 1.8 million pounds sterling), and the 20th was to be a public holiday. Then, the press seized on the Pope's words about Buddhism in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (John Paul II 1994). Tempers rose. Letter after letter was sent to the Press. The Federation of Buddhist Organizations requested a personal apology as did the Jesuit priest, Aloysius Pieris.[13] When the Pope actually arrived, Buddhist leaders boycotted the inter-religious meeting that was scheduled for 8.15 a.m. on the 21st.

The temperature rose so high because *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* did not move beyond the missionary discourse of the nineteenth century. Among the

sentences that Buddhists had read with amazement when the offending chapter was printed in the *The Sunday Times*, were:

> The Buddhist doctrine of salvation constitutes the central point, or rather the only point, of this system. Nevertheless, both the Buddhist tradition and the methods deriving from it have an almost exclusively negative soteriology.
>
> To save oneself means, above all, to free oneself from evil by becoming indifferent to the world, which is the source of evil. This is the culmination of the spiritual process [for Buddhists].
>
> (*The Sunday Times*, 27 November 1994: 25 from John Paul II 1994: 85–6)

Here again, resurrected from a previous century, were the accusations that Buddhism was nihilistic and encouraging of indifference to humanity. One writer to the press judged the 'characterisation of Buddhism as a nurturing of indifference' as 'a monumental blunder'.[14] Another spoke of 'gross irresponsibility'.[15]

An apology of a kind was made. A letter sent to Sri Lanka's Catholic Bishops' Conference on behalf of the Pope stated, 'We are all truly saddened that they [Buddhists] have felt offended.'[16] But there was no recognition that the Pope had been wrong. During the visit, the Pope seemed to bend over backwards to cast Buddhism in a beneficial light, quoting from the *Dhammapada* and praising the *brahmavihāras*.[17] Press reporting of the actual event was largely positive. *The Sunday Times* even included an impressively positive piece by a Buddhist woman.[18]

Nevertheless, the Pope's visit indicated that the legacy of the nineteenth century, although contested, was not dead. It was proof that words such as 'negative' or 'indifference', used so freely about Buddhism by a Bishop Copleston, could, in the twentieth century, trigger reactions similar to those Copleston and others had attracted.

Tension between Buddhists and Christians surfaced periodically in post-independence Sri Lanka, usually linked to a perceived threat to Buddhism's 'rightful place'. An early but paradigmatic example was the dispute over the Le Goc Memorial at the end of 1957. Fr M.J. Le Goc was a Roman Catholic educationalist and former rector of St Joseph's College. The memorial was to be erected in central Colombo. The Colombo Municipal Council had given permission for this in November 1949 and a notice about it had been publicly displayed. No protests were received. Then, when the foundation had been laid, an anonymous group of people, in the middle of the night, placed a Buddha image on top of it. Allegation and counter-allegation followed, eventually necessitating the intervention of the Prime Minister. Buddhist groups insisted that a memorial to a Roman Catholic in such a central urban space should not be allowed in a Buddhist country. The Memorial Committee, the Chair of which was a Hindu, insisted that it was not a Catholic memorial but one to a great educationalist, that many non-Catholics had contributed to it and that even the contractor was a Buddhist.[19]

In the 1960s, 'Catholic Action' emerged in the discourse of threat. Never clearly identified by the attackers, it attained almost mythical proportions, accused of everything from proselytization to seeking to overthrow the government.[20] Mention of it disappeared as quickly as it had arisen, but distrust of Christians did not. From the 1980s onwards, the threat to Buddhism re-configured as the practice of 'unethical conversions', in other words Christian exploitation of the vulnerability of poor Buddhist communities through promises of material gain if conversion took place. One upsurge of accusations surfaced in the early 1990s. *The Times* of 19 September 1993, for instance, carried a photograph of leading Buddhist monks holding a *satyakriya* (Act of Truth) to protest against the unethical conversion of Buddhists. A group calling itself the Christian Consultation of Sri Lanka began to circulate leaflets, with no contact address, about the 'anti-Christian atmosphere' in Sri Lanka because the gospel was 'being effectively proclaimed'. A well-argued, rational reply to this by Gunaseela Vitanage included these words:

> It is alleged that Christians go to the remote parts of the Island set up mission houses and build churches in places where there is not a single Christian and convert poor, illiterate and ignorant village folk by families by offering them money and other material things. It is further alleged that they use foreign powers for this purpose. If this allegation is true, the missionary methods of the Christians are neither moral or spiritual. They are against the very precepts and example of Jesus.
>
> The Christian Consultation cannot dismiss this with a mere shrug or bland denial. This allegation has not been made by some irresponsible and mischievous persons.[21]
>
> (Vitanage 1994 : 9)

I possess a copy of a letter sent to the Bishop of Colombo in January 1997 by Dhammacarini, a Buddhist women's organization. It thanked the Bishop for receiving a delegation from Dhammacarini and recognized that the Bishop condemned 'unethical conversions'. It also urged support for a parliamentary bill to outlaw such conversions:

> for it will conduce to religious harmony and will underscore the fundamental right of the individual to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the freedom to adopt any religion of one's choice voluntarily without undue pressure, inducement or influence. Children and underprivileged people especially must have protection against unethical conversions.
>
> (Dated 30 January 1997 sent to the Bishop of the Diocese of Colombo, Church of Ceylon, Rt Rev. Kenneth Fernando and copied to the major Christian denominations in Sri Lanka, to the author and to national Buddhist organizations)

As this book goes to press, two pieces of legislation are pending, addressing Dhammacarini's concern. The first, tabled in Parliament in July 2004 as a private members bill by the venerable Dr Omalpe Sobitha, monk MP of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Heritage Party), would make 'forcible conversion' illegal. The second, the work of the Minister of Buddha Sasana, Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, verges on declaring all conversion illegal.[22]

In the unethical conversion debate, on the Buddhist side, there has been indignation, anger and a certain amount of 'beleaguerment', to re-use Young and Somaratne's term. There has also been alternative action. In a familiar pattern some Buddhists have chosen to counter perceived Christian contempt of Buddhism with constructions of Christianity that few Christians would recognize. As the twenty-first century opened, the Sinhala Commission, for instance, judged the Christianity of St Paul to be a paganism that joined Christian symbols to the cult of the Sun God of Rome, drawing, as in the nineteenth century, on Western writers (The National Joint Committee 2001: 9).[23] Others have established non-governmental Buddhist organizations promoting social welfare activities in the villages to counter Christian outreach. An early one, *Jayagrahana*, literally 'Victory', started in the 1990s with a particularly anti-Christian agenda. A later one, the Damrivi Foundation, is committed to 'spiritual, social and economic development through Buddhist insights' in the belief that strengthening the faith of Buddhists is the best defence against Christian evangelism and is not opposed to inter faith co-operation.[24]

The mainstream Christian denominations in Sri Lanka have all condemned unethical evangelistic practices. In November 1993, leading Christians signed a joint declaration with Buddhist leaders rejecting and deploring 'all campaigns of conversion of one religionist to another by forceful means or by any other subtle method'.[25] However, there is no doubt that both independent churches and the evangelical wings of the mainstream denominations are involved in evangelism that targets Buddhist villagers. Buddhist indignation has legitimate cause. The depth of the indignation, I would argue, is a direct consequence of the history I have outlined in this Part.

It would be wrong to conclude this survey without stressing the other side of this debate. Parallel to every twentieth-century newspaper article casting Christianity as threat, another can be found stressing the value of co-existence, a perspective more akin to the early years of the nineteenth century. For instance, in the same year as the Le Goc incident, the *Daily News* reported the opening of a Roman Catholic Church at Badalgama at which a member of the Buddhist monastic Sangha lauded the co-operation in the area between Buddhists and Catholics.[26] Similarly in the next year a Buddhist monk addressing a Methodist meeting in Panadura, site of the 1873 Debate, was recorded as saying, 'Let us all join hands irrespective of our religious differences, and unite in the national interest to serve the country'.[27]

Just as there were Buddhist voices affirming the need for respect between religions in the nineteenth century, so it was in the twentieth. The difference in

the twentieth century was that there were also prominent ordained Sri Lankan Christians who were seeking tolerance and mutual respect rather then confrontation. In the middle years of the century, a pioneering group of male Christians emerged. Yohan Devananda, Anglican priest influenced by the Christian ashram movement in India, established a Christian community near Kurunegala with a form of spiritual practice designed to harmonize with Buddhist culture (Devananda 1968). Lynn de Silva, Methodist minister, studied Pāli and called for an informed debate between Buddhists and Christians based on respect.[28] Tissa Balasuriya omi, in May 1969, called Catholics to repent for their failure to relate well to Buddhists.[29] Dr Aloysius Pieris sj, the first Catholic priest to gain a doctorate in Buddhism from a Sri Lankan university, called Christians to immerse themselves in Asian spirituality[30] and Dr Michael Rodrigo omi, towards the end of his life, became involved in a self-sacrificial 'dialogue of life' in a remote Buddhist village (Harris 2002). Christian women should not be forgotten in this picture: Pauline Hensman and Audrey Rebera, who joined hands with Buddhist women in opposition to the abuse of human rights in Sri Lanka's turbulent politics of the 1980s and 1990s and Cynthia Mendis who studied Buddhism academically. Yet, even these Christians, because of the depth of the mistrust present, have had to face criticism and sometimes vilification.

As this book goes to press, the situation remains volatile. Buddhist mistrust towards Christians remains, conditioned by a dynamic that goes back to the nineteenth century, fuelled in the present by Christians who place filling churches above an ethic of co-existence and respect.

EPILOGUE

At the opening of the twentieth century, Sri Lanka continued to be the destination of tourists, missionaries, civil servants, scholars of religion and Western Buddhists. When their gaze turned to Buddhism, nihilistic representations continued to vie with romantic fascination, rationalist approval and enthusiastic embracing. As an epilogue, I offer a number of the British orientalists who inherited and modified the legacy of the nineteenth century.

The Gordon Cumming tradition

The romantic aesthetic of Gordon Cumming and Cave was a forerunner of the twentieth-century tourist industry. Two of their female successors were Bella Sydney Woolf and C.E.Mitton. Woolf is by far the more interesting. Mitton was simply Gordon Cumming's double, both in her romanticism (e.g. Mitton 1916: 148) and her negative approach to Buddhist Doctrine (Mitton 1916: 10–11). In Woolf, however, an important twentieth-century theme is anticipated: the West as locked in materialistic torpor and the East as the home of true spirituality.

Sister of the civil servant, Leonard Woolf, Bella visited Sri Lanka in 1907 to stay with her brother. She eventually married the Assistant Director of the prestigious Peradeniya botanical garden. Her first publication, *How to See Ceylon*, 1914, ran into several editions. *Eastern Stardust* followed, an evocative collection of cameos from Sri Lankan life. As Gordon Cumming she expressed delight in the country's external beauty and frustration at the inadequacy of words to capture, 'the permutations and combinations of colour, occupations and incident' in Colombo's streets (B. Woolf 1914: 43). She differed from her in the contrast she drew between the grey and materialistic West, and the simplicity of the East, and in her profound respect for Buddhism. Buddhism, she declared, is 'one of the loftiest moral codes' (B. Woolf 1914: 78) and Buddhahood, a state of 'spiritual perfection' (B. Woolf 1914: 78). And it is Edwin Arnold on whom she draws rather than the missionary tradition for her interpretation of *nibbāna* (B. Woolf 1914: 78).

Of particular interest is Woolf's contact with the newly formed order of contemporary Sri Lankan nuns, *Sil Mātās*, particularly with its founder,

Sr Sudharmācārī, whom Woolf calls 'Sister Goonachari'.[1] In *Eastern Stardust*, Sudharmācārī is portrayed more sympathetically than any other Sri Lankan. At one point, for instance, Woolf describes going with her to a temple where the nun offers flowers for Woolf's well-being. On leaving, the nun smiles at Bella, who writes, 'I felt as if the tranquility that shone in her dark eyes was reflected in my face. I had been very near the ancient faith that giveth peace that passeth understanding.' (B. Woolf 1922: 70).

Woolf's Buddhism was connected with ethical awareness, peace, spiritual purity and serenity, a view that, in the 1960s and 1970s, brought numerous young people to India and other Asian countries to discover a spirituality they had failed to find in the West.

Missionary writing: recanters and precursors of dialogue

As the twentieth century opened, F.D. Maurice's approach and influence is clearly evident. Even Thomas Moscrop could affirm in 1910 that, 'the heathen live under the system of grace' and that there is 'an essential relationship between Christ and every man' (Moscrop 1910: 268). In spite of this, the early decades of the twentieth century show an ongoing Christian missionary reluctance to praise Buddhism. This is seen particularly in a more noticeable tendency to recant from positions of sympathy.

I will take two examples. John Ewing, Baptist missionary and historian of the Baptist mission in Sri Lanka, arrived in the country in 1902. In his history of the Mission, he claimed Buddhism was, 'the first purely ethical religion' (Ewing 1912: 10) and stated, 'We welcome the higher teachings of Buddha, and rejoice in all points of contact between Buddhism and Christianity' (Ewing 1912: 14). However, the doctrinal points he then outlined were atheism, pessimism and that 'human personality is a curse to be got rid of ' (Ewing 1912: 10). One can only wonder whether he saw the inconsistency in his approach.

Kenneth Saunders, my second example, in the early years of the twentieth century, was Honorary Secretary of the YMCA in India, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. His main publications on Buddhism, published in the 1920s, show a profound sympathy for the religion. In *Gotama Buddha – A Biography*, for instance, he far outstripped Langdon in praise for the personality of the Buddha, referring to his 'serenity', 'moral earnestness', 'sweet reasonableness', 'compassion', 'wisdom' and 'magnetic winsomeness' (Saunders 1922a: 83).

Unlike most nineteenth-century missionaries, he could also praise the *dhamma*. Probing why Westerners were drawn to Buddhism, he could speak positively about the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way. Experience shows, he claimed, that craving (*taṇhā*) is the cause of 'egoism in man and nations' (Saunders 1922b: 34); and in the Middle Way Buddhism had made 'its most remarkable contribution to human thought' (Saunders 1922b: 37). Gone is the paradigm of pessimism so important to his forbears.

This empathetic tone, however, was not consistent. The author of the first chapters of *Gotama Buddha*, for instance, could have been mistaken for a Buddhist, but not the author of the end. Here, Saunders reverts to the familiar missionary standpoint that the Buddha taught the suppression of feelings natural to the human heart. He accuses the Buddha of being so obsessed with the pain of life that he was blind to its joys (Saunders 1922a: 103) and continues with the accusation that 'there is something in Gotama's system which in the end of the day spells failure', adding, 'The ethic of Gotama is like a radiant butterfly just struggling out of its chrysalis. One wing is quite free – the wing of Wisdom; one is still only partially disentangled – the wing of love or Benevolence' (Saunders 1922a: 109).

In later books, censure, rooted in familiar territory – the gap between precept and practice – increased. Echoing missionaries such as Moscrop, he declares that Buddhism in Sri Lanka is decadent and cannot lift people above 'a pervasive and militant demonism' (Saunders 1923: 29).

Saunders' scholarly field was wider than Buddhism. A later book, which compared the Bhagavadgītā, the Lotus Sutra and the Gospel of John, retained Christianization as goal, but suggested that there was unicity of religious awareness in the three texts chosen. They could 'bring men together' and 'help them to understand the unity of civilisation' (Saunders 1928: ix). In this and the call below, he anticipated an important strand of Christian twentieth century thought:

> Meantime, all who seek to serve humanity should ally themselves, should rejoice in one another's faith in the Unseen; and in the saints which each has produced all will find it easier to believe in God. A League of Religions against the common foe, materialism, would do much to reassure humanity, and to serve the cause of the God of light and love.
>
> (Saunders 1928: xi–ii)

Scholars and converts

With the founding of the Pali Text Society in 1881, scholarly research into Theravāda Buddhism blossomed and Sri Lanka continued to be an important influence. Significant among British scholars of Pāli who lived in Sri Lanka in the early years of the twentieth century were two very different personalities: Frank Lee Woodward and Lord Robert Chalmers.

Woodward (1871–1952), son of a Christian clergyman, came to Buddhism through theosophy. After reading classics at Cambridge, he became a teacher. He joined the Theosophical Society in 1902 when Vice-Principal of Stamford School and offered his help to Olcott (Gunewardene 1973: 10–11). In 1903, he travelled to Sri Lanka to become Principal of Mahinda College in Galle. To this day, he is remembered in Sri Lanka for his caring leadership of Mahinda. It is said that members of the monastic Sangha attended his farewell, a monastic first for a lay person (Gunawardene 1973: 51). His wider legacy was his translations for the Pali

Text Society. Some still remain in the Society's List of Issues. Most of these were completed after he left Galle for Australia in 1919.

Chalmers (1858–1938?) was a High Church Anglican and Governor of Sri Lanka between 1913 and 1916. Influenced by Rhys Davids, he had completed several translations for the Pali Text Society by 1913. As a result, there is the most endearing picture of him amazing the monastic Sangha soon after his arrival by speaking flawless Pāli to them (Toussaint 1973: 37). His time in office, however, was shot through with difficulties: the riots of 1915[2] for instance and the tragic loss of his two sons in the First World War. After he left Sri Lanka, his love of Pāli did not fade. His translation work, as Woodward's, continued well into the 1930s.

Woodward and Chalmers represent the ongoing dedication of Western collaborators with the Pali Text Society. It was a commitment inspired by the conviction that the Theravāda texts could speak for themselves if they were accurately translated. Woodward, though, did not restrict himself to translation. In other publications, he showed himself a successor to Dickson in his portrayal of devotional practices through which he challenged both Western 'rational' Buddhists and those who condemned Buddhism as pessimistic. Describing a *Poya* Day, for instance, he wrote:

> Glancing over the faces, one finds no trace of that pessimistic resignation which the ignorant always attribute to the followers of the Buddha. Sorrow there may be in the world . . . but to meet it with joyful hearts, with confidence of ultimate success, because lives are many, to be as merry as one may, that is the keynote of the Buddhist life.
>
> (Woodward 1914: 4–5)

Woodward differed from Dickson in one thing: that he wrote as participant rather than observer.

Western renouncers

Today, Western Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka number over a hundred and there are also Western women there who are a *Sil Mātā* (ten precept nun) or a *Bhikkhuṇī*, a nun with higher ordination. Many have followed in the footsteps of Allan Bennett. Several names stand out as pioneers. Nyanatiloka Thera (1878–1957), born Anthon Walter Florus Gueth, of Roman Catholic parents, spent two thirds of his life in Sri Lanka. He was ordained in Burma in 1904, drawn by Ananda Metteyya's example, but returned to Sri Lanka in 1905. During his life, he ordained fifty-four Westerners (Gunasekera 1979: 173) and helped to found The Island Hermitage on Dodanduva Lake in 1911.[3] Nyanaponika Thera (1901–1994), born Siegmund Feniger, pupil of Nyanatiloka, was one of the three founders of the Buddhist Publication Society in 1958.[4] Ayya Khema (1923–1997), born Ilse Ledermann, founded Parappaduwa Nuns Island as a sister

to The Island Hermitage.[5] All were German-born. Two British renunciants linked with this narrative were J.P. McKechnie and Osbert Moore. McKechnie (1872–1951) was ordained the venerable Sīlācāra in Myanmar, after corresponding with Ananda Metteyya (Harris 1998: 11). Moore (1905–1960) received *upasaṃpāda* from Ven. Nyanatiloka in Sri Lanka in 1950, as Ven. Ñāṇamoli, after serving in the military in the Second World War. Both wrote prolifically.

A stereotype of Sīlācāra would be that he stressed only the rationality of Buddhism. Arnold's words linking 'Bright Reason' with the 'Middle Road' were spread on the frontispiece of his pamphlet on the Four Noble Truths, which stressed the realism of the Truths and the Buddha's avoidance of metaphysical speculation (Sīlācāra 1922). His portrayal of the Buddha in a biography for young people showed the Buddha rejecting the use of miracles to entice followers (Sīlācāra 1927: 215–24). Yet, an early article written in Myanmar before his ordination belies this. Here, as Woodward, he uses the empirically less-than-rational, passionately challenging the charge that Buddhism is nihilistic. Buddhists are joyful, he declares. They see a larger transcendent picture than Westerners. What Westerners with limited vision have called pessimism is sublime optimism (McKechnie 1905: 33–47). I have not done enough work on Sīlācāra to know whether he visited Sri Lanka.[6] It is more than likely.

Ñāṇamoli is known for his translations[7] and a life of the Buddha.[8] He also wrote notebooks, extracts from which were published posthumously by Nyanaponika. A person with a sensitive and mature mind emerges from these. Disillusionment with both the West and the Christian tradition is apparent plus a wish to be unnoticed. 'It is my ambition to attain to obscurity' appeared in one entry (Ñāṇamoli 1971: 15).

Ñāṇamoli steeped himself in the Pāli texts and developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of them but this was not enough in itself. On the evidence of his notebooks, proving Buddhism's superiority or privileging textual knowledge were not for him. 'Dogmas', he wrote, 'are like stays to sustain a sagging understanding. But as they hold one up so too they hold one back' (Ñāṇamoli 1971: 22). Later came, 'Certainty is absence of infinity; infinity is presence of uncertainty' (Ñāṇamoli 1971: 81). But he was not one to emphasize devotion or ritual either. 'In some ways', he wrote, 'a saint is no longer a saint as soon as he is recognized and proclaimed and worshipped. A saint is a saint in so far as his being influences the actions of others, without their reflexive awareness of the fact, towards the lessening of suffering' (Ñāṇamoli 1971: 129). He was unwilling even to call Buddhism a religion because the word meant 'to bind' and the dhamma was, 'the incomparable safety from bondage' (Ñāṇamoli 1971: 168).

Did Ñāṇamoli and his allies therefore epitomise the textualization of Buddhism that has been linked to the orientalist enterprise by followers of Said? To say 'yes' would, I believe, be too simplistic. Those who chose to live in Sri Lanka and to draw from its wells certainly fed into the Western academic tendency to privilege the texts but they cannot be identified with it. They did not go as far, for instance, as Charles Strauss, an American Buddhist praised by the

Anagārika Dharmapāla (Guruge 1965: 708) who could claim that genuine Buddhism could only be found in the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* (Strauss 1923: vi), disregarding all contemporary manifestations. They certainly loved the texts. The texts fed their spiritual life and their spiritual aspirations. But they also loved the living tradition. Why else would they have stayed in Asia? And, within the living tradition, they also found the texts.

GLOSSARY

Technical terms used before the standardization of spelling

Aivichi-maha-narake	*Avīci Narake*: one of the hells in Buddhist cosmology
Ajaraya	*Ajajjara*: not fading, an epithet used for *nibbāna*
Amurta	*Amarā*: not subject to death
Anatmayah	*Anattā*: non-self
Anitya/Aneizza Anittayah	*Anicca*: impermanence
Apayas	*Apāya*: a state of deprivation or loss within Buddhist cosmology
Arihat/Arhat/Rahat arameyo	*Arahat*: one who has gained enlightenment through eliminating the ten fetters, attaining *nibbāna* in this life
Arroopeh lokes/Arupelokas	*Arūpaloka*: a formless world
Asankas/Asankyas/Asankyáta	*Asankheyya*: an incalculable period of time
Asgirie-wihare	*Asgiri Vihāre*: headquarters of the Asgiri Chapter of the Siyam Fraternity of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks
Asoora-bhawana/Asoora-bhawané	Asurabhāvanā: the abode of the asuras, enemies of the gods in Buddhist cosmology
Bales	*Bali* ceremonies, which are elaborate rituals performed to propitiate a planetary deity, of which there are believed to be nine, particularly when it is believed that a planetary deity has caused the sickness of an individual
Banamaduva	Preaching hall in a Buddhist temple
Bhaawena	*Bhāvanā*: meditation
Bhawatanhaa	*Bhāvataṇhā*: craving for life or being

Bhoodha/Bhooddha/Boodh/ Boodhoo/Boudhou/Budhum	Buddha
Bodhisatva/Bōdhisatwayo/ Bhooddisat/Poodisatwayo Boddhisattva	*Bodhisatta*: one who aspires to Buddhahood
Bogas Tree/ Bogahah Tree	Bodhi or Bo Tree: the tree under which the Buddha gained enlightenment
Brahma-lōkaya/Brachmea-Loches/ Brachmah lókes/Brahma lokas	*Brahmaloka*: one of the highest celestial worlds in Buddhist cosmology – the abode of the Brahmas
Calpa	See Kalpa
Chakkraia	*Cakka*: wheel used symbolically to denote the Buddha's teachings
Covel	Kovil: Hindu temple
D'aana/Daana	*Dana*: giving, generosity
Damata/Dammada/Dermah	*Dhamma*: the natural order or the totality of the Buddhist teachings
Dambadiwa	See Giambu Dwipe
Deitti	Possibly *ditthivipatti*: those who have stifled right views
Devales/Dewallas/dewals	*Devāla*: temple for the gods often found within a Buddhist temple
Dewa lokas/dewia loches/ diwya lokas	*Devā loka*: abode of the gods
Dewas/dewatawo/devetas/deviyo	*Devā*: gods
Dharma Raja	*Dhammaraja*: king of righteousness, epithet of the Buddha
Diepankereh Boodha/ Diepankerenan	Dipankara: the first of 24 Buddhas in the Theravāda tradition, the last of which was Gotama
Doccha/Dook-kayah/Dukha	*Dukkha*: unsatisfactorinesss, anguish, suffering
Dukha satya	*Dukkha ariyasacca*: the Noble Truth of Suffering
Eiswara	See Isware
Gaudma/Gautama/Gauteme/ Gautemeh Boodha/Gowtama	Gotama Buddha
Giambu Dwipe/Giambu/ Dambadiwa/Janboodweape/ Jambudwipa	*Jambudvipa* or *Jambudipa*: 1 of 4 continents where humans beings live in Buddhist cosmology
Goewanse	Goyigama: Sinhala caste of farmers
Isware/Eisware	*Isvara*: supreme God, most often used to refer to Śiva
Janboodweape/ Jambudwipe	See Giambu Dwipe

Jassodere Devi/Jasodera	Yasodhara: the Buddha's wife
Jugandere	Yugandhara: see Mahā Meru
Jutukas	*Jātaka*: stories of the Buddha's previous lives
Kaamatanhaa	*Kāmataṇhā*: craving for sensual pleasures
Kalpe	*Kappa* or kalpa: an aeon, a single world cycle
Kamelokas	*Kāma lokā*: the sensuous worlds
Kappoism/Kappooism	*Kapuism*: the worship of the deities, usually for securing material blessings
Kapuralls/Kapuwa/Koppuhs/ Coppahs	*Kapurala* or *kapuva*: priest of a devale
Kowilas	Kovil: Hindu temple
Maha Méru/ Maha Meru Pargwette/ Parwate/Mt Mienmo	Sineru, Meru or Sumeru: the mountain at the centre of the cosmos according to Buddhist cosmology surrounded by 7 mountain ranges one of which is the Yugandhara
Manoepoloka/Manusya lokas	*Manussaloka*: the world of human beings
Marea/Marya	*Māra*: literally killer; the force of evil that destroys holy living
Milindaprasnaya (Sinhala)	Pāli: *Milindapañha*: Milinda's Questions, a non-canonical but important text in the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition, portraying a dialogue between the King Milinda and the monk, Nāgasena
Mōksayah/moksé	*Mokṣa* (sanskrit), *mokkha* (Pāli): release, liberation
Nata/Nathe	*Nāta*: one of the principal gods within the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon
Nats	The traditional gods/spirits of Burmese Buddhism
Neerwana/Nerewana/Nerwana/ Nieban/Nimban/Nirri-wana/ Nirgowané/Nirwanapooraya/ Nivani	*Nibbāna*
Oenanse	See Terrunanse
Pāramitāwas	*Pāramī* or *pāramitā*: perfections
Passes/Pasay-boodhoos/ Pase budhas	*Pacceka Buddhas*: Buddhas who reach enlightenment through their own effort but do not preach
Paticha samuppáda	*Paṭiccasamuppāda*: dependent origination
Pohoya	*Poya*: the quarter days of the moon
Poodisatweyo	See *Bodhisattva*
Prataya Sataka	A collection of Sanskrit ślokas
Pratipatti	Probably *Pātimokkha*: the rule of the monastic community

Ráhāns/ Rahat arameyo	See *arahat*
Rahoule/Rahula Cumare	Rāhula: the only son of the Buddha, who became a Buddhist monk
Ráhu	Rāhu: the chief of the asuras
Rawkshasa	*Rakkhasā*: a class of demons
Riry Yaksaya	Hiri, Siri or Riri Yakkha: the blood yakkha, believed to cause serious illness
Sacrea/Sakkraia/Sakreja	Sakka: usually seen as the chief of the gods and a devotee of the Buddha
Sakwalla-galla/ Sakwalle/Sakwalas	*Sakvaḷa*: a world system in Buddhist cosmology
Samen/Saman-dewa-raja	Saman: an important god within the Sri Lankan pantheon
Sangsára/Sangsaara	*Saṃsāra*: the cycle of existence or becoming
Seela/sil	*Sīla*: morality
Soudodene Maha Ragia	Suddhodana: the Buddha's father
Terrunanse/Tirinanxes/ Tirounnanse/Oenanse	Therunnase: Sinhala form of address to a Buddhist monk
Triwededooscharitia	Threefold observance
Vishnou/Visnu/Wisnu	Vishnu: Hindu god taken into the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon
Wasawarto Marayo/ Wasawartti Mara/ Wassawarty	Vasavatti Marā: the force of evil personified as the god Vasavatti
Wesantara	Vessantara: the Bodhisatta as King of Sivi, who features in the Vessantara Jātaka
Wibhawatanhaa	*Vibhavataṇhā*: craving for non-existence
Winyanaskandaya	*Viññānakkandha*: the aggregate of consciousness
Wisnu	Vishnu
Yakaduras	*Yakādura*: an exorcist, one who acts the part of the demon in the traditional exorcist rituals of Sri Lanka
Yakkhas/Yakseyo/ Yakshyaya	*Yakkha*: a class of non-human beings in Buddhist cosmology; decadent gods with supernormal powers
Yammeh Raja/Yame	Yama: the god of death
Yassodera/Jassodere Devi/ Jasodera	Yasodhara: the Buddha's wife
Zabudiba	*Jambudvipa*: see Giambu Dwipe

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 'The Kirkpatricks inhabited a world that was far more hybrid, and with far less clearly defined ethnic, national and religious borders, than we have been conditioned to expect, either by the conventional Imperial history books . . . or for that matter by the post-colonial work coming from new generations of scholars, many of whom tend to follow the path opened up by Edward Said in 1978 in his pioneering *Orientalism*' (Dalrymple 2002: xlvi–xlvii).
2 See for example 'Traditions, even when they are handed down, do not remain frozen' (Thapar 1997: 1). 'We understand interreligious communication as a constantly and ever newly scrutinized "simultaneous translation," in which the formation of language and tradition is subject to constant change' (Lai and von Bruck 2001: 3).
3 *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society, 1820–1* (*CMS Report*):187.
4 *CMS Report* 1822–3: 171.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 See also Percival who accused the Portuguese of avarice, barbarity and tyranny (Percival 1803: 7, 29) See Guruge 1965: xxviii; Malalgoda 1976: 37 and C. R. de Silva 1942, I: 253 who argue that Britain's early tolerance towards Buddhism was to weaken links between Buddhists in the South and those in the Kandyan Kingdom.
2 For example John Davy praises the land tenure system (Davy 1821: 185); gold and silver work (Davy 1821: 259); social laws (Davy 1821: 180); agriculture (Davy 1821: 270–6) and family relationships (Davy 1821: 289), but could write that the Sinhala character was 'low, tame and undecided: with few strong lights or shades in it, with few prominent virtues or vices' (Davy 1821: 291–2).
3 See letter of Johnston, 13 November 1826, advocating a law code based on the universal but, 'scrupulously adapted to the local circumstances of the country' (Turnour 1836: vii). Governor Warren Hastings voiced similar views in India in the late eighteenth century (Sugirtharajah 2003: 2).
4 For further information about Johnston see Guruge 1989: 13; Beven 1946 15–16; C.R. de Silva 1942, I: 325–41; Rutnam 1988; H.W. Tambiah 1953; 'Untitled letter of reply to William Harvard and Benjamin Clough by Johnston, supporting missionary work: *Methodist Magazine* (*MM*), XXXIX, 1816: 118; Turnour 1836: vii.
5 Further examples are Joinville Joinville pp. 20–34 (Section One) and John D' Oyly. D' Oyly arrived in Sri Lanka in 1801 to become, in 1815, Chief Translator to the Government and Resident of the Kandyan provinces. His most important publication was D' Oyly 1832. For further information see Malalgoda 1976: 110–23; C.R. de Silva 1942, I: 133–200; Toussaint 1935a: 43 and Hulugalle 1980: 153.

6 Principally London Missionary Society 1795; Scottish Missionary Society 1796; Church Missionary Society (CMS) 1799; General Baptist Missionary Society 1816 and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) 1813. See Findlay and Holdsworth 1921, 1: 23–80.
7 For an excellent account of the change from accommodation, inter-marriage and conversion to Indian religions present in the East India Company in the eighteenth century, to separation and imperial arrogance, see Dalrymple 2002.
8 Eighteenth-century Britain had seen two competing missiologies – that proactive evangelism was pointless before another Pentecost, a view linked to belief in predestination as espoused by some Calvinist churches and that salvation was available to all who chose to receive it, a view taken by Methodism, influenced by the Dutch Reformed theologian, Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609), and by reformed or 'moderate' Calvinism (Piggin 1984: 84) under the influence of people such as Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and William Carey (1761–1834), the first missionary of the General Baptist Missionary Society. See Fuller 1826.
9 For example, the campaigns of Methodist missionary Spence Hardy against slavery *The Friend* (*TF*) VI 1, July 1842: 1–2; VI, III, September 1842: 41–6 and against caste (*TF*, IV, 8 February 1841: 143–5).
10 Palm died at 66 years, in 1842, in the house of Gogerly (*TF*, VII, IV, October 1842: 61).
11 The Baptists sent James Chater. The Methodist Group consisted of William and Elizabeth Harvard, Benjamin Clough, William Ault, Thomas Squance, James Lynch and George Erskine.

The CMS group comprised of Samuel Lambrick, Robert Mayor, Joseph Knight and Benjamin Ward.
12 Thomas Griffith joined Chater in 1816 but returned to England within a year. Chater left in 1827. A replacement, Ebenezer Daniel, arrived in 1830.
13 For instance, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794) and *Natural Theology, or the Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1809), which included the watchmaker analogy.
14 Wesleyan missionary James Lynch, for example, held this belief (Taggart 1986: 104–27).
15 See Chapter 2, note 15.
16 See Almond 1988: 7–12; Davy 1821: 230–2; Forbes 1841, 11: 205; Buchanan 1799: 258–9; and Mottau 1983: 29 where Valentijn refutes the view that the Buddha was a Syrian Jew or Joshua.
17 Also see Knox 1989, an enlarged edition that includes his autobiography, discovered in the Bodleian Library in 1910.
18 Diogo de Couto's *Decades Da Asia* and Joao de Barros' *Decades* were among other Portuguese works. Barros did not visit Sri Lanka. His account of the Portuguese in India ends in 1526. See Ferguson 1908 and De Queyroz 1930, I: 11.
19 'Could the devil counterfeit any better so many centuries in advance the mysteries of the infancy of Christ our Redeemer?' (De Queyroz 1930, I: 125). See also De Queyroz 1930, I: 141 which claims that 'the Devil has forestalled everything'.
20 For biographical information see S. D. Saparamadu's comprehensive introduction to Pieter Brohier's translation in Baldeaus 1960: vii–xlvi.
21 A five volume work, *Oud and Nieuw Oost-Indian*, was compiled after his time in Batavia and East Java between 1685 and 1714. The first translation into English was by J. Armour in Sri Lanka, presented to Sir Alexander Johnston (*Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon* (*JDBUC*), LXI, 1983: 10)
22 For information about Jones see Allen 2002: 42–74; Dalrymple 2003: 41–2 and Sugirtharajah, 2003: 1–37. His first discourse to the Society claimed Asia was, 'Nurse of sciences, the inventress of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious actions,

fertile in the productions of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government' (*AS*, I: x) although this was predicated on the belief that contemporary India was degenerate.

23 Buchanan joined the East India Company in 1784 and accompanied Captain Michael Symes on Britain's first political mission to Ava in 1795. In 1804 he became Director of the National History Project of India. See C. Allen 2002: 10–21, 75–101 for further biographical information.

24 Little is known about Mahony. Internal evidence suggests that his research drew on the *Rājāvalī*, Sinhala and Dutch manuscripts, and dialogues with a Buddhist monk and 'learned Hindus'. J.H. Harington described him as 'an officer of the Bombay establishment, sometime resident in Ceylon' (Harington 1805: 503).

25 See Mottau 1983: 90 for Valentijn's reference to a Supreme Being. Ribeiro claims the Sinhalese, 'acknowledge one God as the author of nature' (Ribeiro 1685: 138) and Knox that one God is acknowledged to be Supreme as creator of heaven and earth (Knox 1681: 72).

26 Buchanan states that Buddhists, 'esteem the opinion of a divine being, who created the universe, to be highly impious' (Buchanan 1799: 180).

27 For example, Ribeiro 1685: 139.

28 William Ward 1811. Further editions appeared in 1817 and 1820.

2 THE EARLY BRITISH VISITORS: MAPPING THE GROUND

1 Pieris judged it to be 'a free rendering of passages of the poem' rather than a translation (Pieris 1954: 257).

2 More work could be done on Joinville's journals. I have used a secondary source: Raven-Hart 1963.

3 Joinville lists 17 sources that include *Dīgha Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya; Rājaratnākariya*, and *Pūjāvaliya* (Joinville 1803: 443–4).

4 For information on the first chaplain, Rev. Philip Rosenhagen, see Lewis 1914: 114. For a description of Cordiner's ten months at the Madras Military Male Orphan Asylum, which catered mainly for the children of members of the military by Indian women, see Cordiner 1820: 81–140.

5 Davy joined the army after studying medicine in Edinburgh. His publications stemming from travel to many countries encompassed medicine, angling, the work of his brother Sir Humphrey Davy and accounts of the Caribbean and the Mediterranean.

6 See Chapter 1, Note 11. Arriving penniless in Bombay, Coke having died on the journey, the group travelled in two batches to Sri Lanka. Harvard with Elizabeth, his wife, arrived in March 1815 and stayed in Colombo, where the mission was helped by Sir Alexander Johnston; the Governor and Andrew Armour. Armour was a Scotsman and committed lay Methodist, who was posted to Colombo in 1800 eventually to become Principal of the Government Seminary near Hulftsdorf and interpreter to the Supreme Court. See Armour 1816: 36 and Armour 1817: 236–7 for his letters to the Methodist Mission Committee. In 1819, Harvard left Sri Lanka because of ill health.

7 For instance, with Methodist minister, William Buckley Fox, who worked in Sri Lanka from 1817–1823 and helped him to translate Sinhala texts.

8 Jones here places the Buddha's birth in about the year 1027 BCE 'taking the *Chinese* account of Buddha's birth from M De *Guignes*, as the most authentic medium between *Abu'lfazl* and the *Tibetians*'.

9 The two priests became Don Adries and Don Adrian de Silva. According to the missionaries, they were baptized as infants but had been placed by their parents in a Buddhist temple near Ambalangoda. *Extracts from Quarterly Letters Addressed to the*

Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by Ministers of the South Ceylon District (*QL)* No. 11, January 1818, from The Colombo station: 13–24, here pp. 21–23). See also Spence Hardy 1865: 83 and Coplans 1980: 58.

10 For instance, Squance 1816b: 156. See also *SR* 1817: 2 and *SR* 1819: 4 – in both sources the belief is judged depraved.

11 '*Nirwána* – the summum bonum of Buddhism, viz. entire destruction of all the passions, total cessation of all the animal functions, extinction of every particle of the vivifying principle, final emancipation of the soul or sentient faculty, exemption from further transmigration, escape from every state of existence, annihilation!' (Clough 1830: 292).

12 For contemporary accounts of Buddhist cosmology see Marasinghe 1974 and Gethin 1998.

13 Bruce Kapferer's work on exorcism in Sri Lanka, for instance, echoes Upham's views concerning Buddhism's accommodation of other forms of religiosity under the supremacy of the Buddha (Kapferer 1983, 1997).

14 See note 6.

15 See Barrow for the view that Philalethes was Rev. G. Bisset (Barrow 1857: 1) and Colvin R. de Silva for J.P. Lewis' view that he was Rev. Robert Fellowes (C.R. de Silva 1942, II: 612). Bisset served as a colonial chaplain with Rev. T.J. Twisleton and Rev. J.M.S. Glenie in the second decade of the century. He was also the Governor's brother-in-law and private secretary, according to Bennett (Bennett 1843: 341). The Preface to Philalethes' work carries the initials H.W.B. to add to the confusion.

16 Using Philalethes' spelling, the extracts are taken from *the Nidi Shastram* (Philalethes 1817: 298–307); *Wessakare Satake or the Sayings of the Wise* (pp. 308–14); *the Malabar Book* (pp. 315–18), *Connevendam: Sayings of a Female Sage* (pp. 319–22).

17 The *Jātaka* chosen are (1) *Maṇicora-Jātaka* (No. 194, Upham 1829: 33) which sees a wicked King suffering a dose of his own methods of punishment (2) *Mahā-Kaṇha-Jātaka* (No. 469) in which the god Sakka visits an irreligious kingdom to reform it.

18 See Harris 1994c: 40–6 and Harris 1997b for exploration of gender under the imperial gaze.

19 Born in Northern Ireland, Clarke became an itinerant Methodist preacher after meeting John Wesley. Thrice President of the Methodist Conference, conversant in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, he wrote a commentary on the Bible as well as three volumes of sermons. He was also known for philanthropic work and his support of overseas mission (Taggart 1986: 87–103).

20 The two were baptized Adam Sri Muni Ratna and Alexander Dharmarama after Clarke and Johnston. See also Spence Hardy 1865: 81; P.E. Pieris 1948; poem by Miss Landon about the monks in *Ceylon Literary Register*, 1, 10 December 1886: 142–3; Young and Somaratne 1996: 57–9; and Harris 1997: 59–62.

3 INTRODUCTION

1 For an assessment of slavery in Sri Lanka, see Harris 1996.

2 For an accurate account of the development of plantation labour see S. Nadesan 1993.

3 For example, Major Jonathon Forbes spoke of 'a rapid improvement in the face of the country; a most beneficial change in the native character; generally diminished taxation; rapidly increasing revenue, a prosperous and happy people . . . ' (Forbes 1841 I: 3). Rev. Robert Spence Hardy cast the British as 'men who have breathed the rime and braved the snow-storm' to break the fetters of a nation, who, without them, would 'remain slaves as long as the race lasts' (Spence Hardy 1864: 316).

4 With Hon. Mr Justice Stark as President and Rev. J.G. MacVicar, John Capper and William Knighton as office holders, other founder members included Archdeacon Bailey, Rev. William Bridgenell, Bishop Chapman, Emerson Tennent, Rev. D.J. Gogerly, Rev. J.F. Haslem, Rev. Robert Spence Hardy, Andrew Kessen, George Lee and John Murdoch.
5 For criticism of Upham see Turnour 1836: xviii. For criticism of Davy and Philalethes, see Turnour 1836: 88.
6 See also Binning 1857, I: 12.
7 C.O. 55/79 Lord Glenelg to MacKenzie No 18 of 2 October, 1837 quoted in K.M. De Silva 1965: 26.
8 'We are daily more and more impressed with the idea that it is of the utmost importance the missionaries to the east should make themselves acquainted, to the best of their ability, with the dogma of the religion they are called upon to oppose.'
9 One of the best popular accounts of this is to be found in. C. Allen 2002. See especially pp. 140–99.
10 Introducing lectures given to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Turnour explained that he had once thought of analysing the *Tipiṭaka* for the Society with the help of Buddhist monks but had concluded that the work would be 'of a magnitude utterly inadmissible in any periodical'. He had then considered a compendium but had realized the job had already been done by the venerable Devamitta, whose work had the 'authority and authenticity, which no compendium, exclusively formed by any orientalist of a different faith, and more modern times, can have claim to' (Turnour 1837: 504–5).

4 THE ARROGANCE OF POWER: THE MEMOIR WRITERS

1 In 1861, his first African expedition led to the 'discovery' of Lake Albert Nyanza. From 1869–1874, he was involved in the military action that created the Sudan, becoming its first Governor-General. In 1874, he returned to England and lived in South Devon until his death.
2 Binning refers to the 'five commands' of the Buddha (Binning 1857, I: 45), Campbell to its 'mild and excellent precepts' (Campbell 1843, II: 183) and Sullivan says of the monastic Sangha that their rules should 'produce the most perfect priesthood the world has known' (Sullivan 1857: 71).
3 For example, 'shocking though it be, Demon worship is extensively practised by the naturally gentle Cingalese, and far from decreasing appears rather to spread, and retain a firmer hold over their superstitious and ignorant minds which devoid of any clear idea of morality and religion are completely governed by fear, and as they attribute all great misfortunes and calamities to be the work of evil spirits, they seek to propitiate these wicked ? by acts of devotion to their service' (Darby Griffith, IV, 29 October 1842: 61).

5 CHRISTIAN EXCLUSIVISM: THE PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES AND THEIR FRIENDS

1 For instance, responding to censure from Britain about expenditure, a meeting of the South Ceylon District of the Methodist Mission on 1 April 1841 minuted, 'The sum they (missionaries) at present receive is barely sufficient to enable them to support themselves with moderate comfort, as is manifested by the fact that in almost every instance brethren returning to England have had to sell their libraries that they might leave the island free of debt and have a sum in hand sufficient to carry them to London' (District Minute Book South Ceylon 1831–1871: 97, Methodist Church Headquarters, Colombo).

2 See J. Ferguson 1893, Appendix XII: 428 for an appreciation of his life.
3 See also Carter 1862: 125 and 'Howard Malcolm on Buddhism' in *TF*, IV. III, September 1840: 49–52, for example: 'It presents nothing to love for its Deity is dead, nothing as the ultimate object of action but self' (p. 50).
4 Selkirk for instance quotes Rev. Benjamin Clough, 'But the principles of Budhism are such as make way for this species of satanic adoration. And wherever Budhism has been established, the inhabitants are left under the uncontrolled dominion of the devil' (Selkirk 1844: 233).
5 See for example, William Oakley, CMS missionary writing in the *Church Missionary Gleaner* (*CMG*), 1868: 67.
6 See for example Trimnell 1838; Fox 1841 and Selkirk 1844: 380, 398, 423.
7 See Chapter 6, p. 67: Bishop 1908, I: 69.
8 See for example J.S. 'Max Muller on Nirvana', *TF*, Second Series, I March 1870: 27–33.
9 'What they called *karma* ruled everything, and the meaning of *karma* was simply action. The balance of merit and demerit controlled the universe . . . causing all the circumstances to happen which influenced sentient beings' (J. Allen 1863: 738); 'Karma: actions having a moral quality' (Carter 1868: 58).
10 See for example William Oakley, 'The highest degree of happiness he expects or hopes for, is to cease to be, and this most of the people hope they shall one day reach, after passing through bodies of jackals, crows, serpents, toads, for ages' (*Church Missionary Gleaner* (*CMG*), 1868: 42).
11 The stanzas are from the *Prataya Sataka*, a non-Buddhist Sanskrit book, which he presents as normative, even though one claims women are 'a savage race of she-devils' (Selkirk 1844: 143) and another, that deception should be used to the deceitful (Selkirk 1844: 153). He also censures the *Vessantara Jātaka* (Selkirk 1844: 99).
12 Reports from SPG missionaries to their Headquarters, from E. Mooyart, 12 August 1843: Q/IND/COL 2 (SPG Archives).
13 See also *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society 1843–44* (*CMS Report*): 85 where someone is given three months excommunication for allowing the performance of a devil ceremony.
14 Handwritten South Ceylon District Minute Book, 1831–1871: 241 (Methodist Headquarters, Colombo).
15 Bridgenell writing from Negombo Station on 3 July 1837, *Extracts from Quarterly Letters Addressed to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by Ministers of the South Ceylon District* (*QL*), No. XXXIX, July 1837: 17–23, here p. 23.
16 *QL* from Kessen, 15 December 1848.
17 See for example James Nicholson writing from Colombo Station North, *QL*, No. LIII, July 1864: 6–9, here pp. 7–8; William Oakley in *CMS Report* 1844–1845: 87.
18 Selected Letters, Sri Lanka Vol. I, from Chapman to Rev. E. Hawkins, 11 August 1847 (SPG Archives).
19 Kilner writing from the Caltura Station, *QL*, No. XXXIX, July 1837: 23–27, here p. 24.
20 Browning (Selkirk 1844: 214) and Mayor (Selkirk 1844: 230).
21 See description of the inauguration of a 'High Priest' (Selkirk 1844: 413) and of a seven day event for the dedication of 24 Buddha images (Selkirk 1844: 443).
22 Ceylon Letters Vol. 1, letter of 31 October 1847, Chapman to Hawkins, from Matara (SPG Archives).

6 MISSIONARY SCHOLARS: DANIEL GOGERLY AND ROBERT SPENCE HARDY

1 Richard Watson (1781–1833), systematic theologian and President of the 1826 Methodist Conference, became Wesleyan Missionary Secretary in 1819.

2 Handwritten South Ceylon District Minute Book 1831–1871: 231 (Methodist Church Archives, Colombo).
3 Gogerly married in 1817. His wife died in Madras in 1821. There were no children. His second wife was Anna Joanne Suzanne van Lyndon, a Dutch woman. His third wife was Italian and his fourth was the widow of the Baptist missionary, James Chater. From his second marriage, there was one son, Daniel Gogerly, and all the Sri Lankan Gogerlys derive from him. He had seven children. The eldest married a Sinhala woman named Gunawardena. (Information gained from Alfie Morogoda-Gogerly, great grandson of D.J. Gogerly's son.)
4 Frederick Jobson meeting Gogerly in 1860 wrote: 'He showed me, with evident delight, a complete copy of the works of Budhu, which had been made for him by an intelligent and learned Buddhist priest, belonging to one of the chief temples' (Jobson 1862: 79–80). See also Spence Hardy 1850: 170 and Gogerly's claim in 1845, that he has 'the whole of the sacred text' and the principal commentaries (Bishop, 1908, I: 50).
5 Gogerly could also use stereotypical missionary vocabulary:

> Budhism has here its full operation . . . no one conversant with the people can fail to observe that its effects are to render them earthly, sensual and devilish. Ignorance and superstition jointly exercise their influence, the latter filling them with the daily apprehension of evils to be dreaded from the influence of malign demons, and the deep and almost impenetrable darkness of the former rendering them unable to perceive the folly of their refuge of lies, or to understand the doctrines of the Truth, when propounded to them.
> (*QL,* 30 October 1837, from Matara)

6 Handwritten District Minute Book 1831–1871, first entry for 1863: 231–3, here p. 232 (Methodist Church Archives, Colombo).
7 See, for example, Clough 1824.
8 Bishop was a Methodist missionary in Sri Lanka between 1903 and 1909 and sought to affirm the contact points between Buddhism and Christianity (Small 1968: 575).
9 I am indebted to Barbara Coplans for much of my biographical material on Spence Hardy (Coplans 1980).
10 Gooneratne, commenting on Hardy's literary style, claims he could say 'the simplest thing with the utmost grandeur' and could use methods to 'overwhelm the average reader's doubts of the truth of the arguments put forward' (Gooneratne 1968: 93). Gogerly's style in contrast was measured and rational.
11 Spence Hardy explains these sections of the *Sutta Piṭaka* as including 'both a translation and a commentary or explanation. In some instances the translation is almost literal, whilst in others the comment is so extensive as to form almost an original work' (Spence Hardy 1853: 519–20).
12 *Dīgha Nikāya*, I, 1–46.
13 Natthi rāgasamo aggi, natthi dosasamo kali, Natthi khandhasamā dukkha, natthi santiparaṁ sukhaṁ.
14 See also verse 126: Some persons are born from the womb/the sinful are produced in hell/those of virtuous conduct go to heaven/and those without desire become extinct (Bishop 1908, II: 271): *Gabbham eke uppajjanti, nirayam pāpakammino, Saggaṁ sugatino yanti, parinibbanti anāsavā*.
15 *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, IV, 355–72.
16 *Majjhima Nikāya*, III, 202–6.
17 Spence Hardy also accuses the Buddha of drawing a false analogy between nature (seed producing seed) and human life. He admits that moral qualities can be passed on within human families but ridicules that this could happen across species (Spence Hardy 1866: xliii).

18 These include: *Cūḷakammavibhaṅgha Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, 111, 202–6; the *Verañjaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 290–1; the *Mahādhammasamādana Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 309–17; the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, III, 180–93.
19 *Dīgha Nikāya*, III, 180–93.
20 *Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 285–90.
21 See also Spence Hardy 1866: xl, 202.
22 See note 12.
23 For instance, the simile of the stolen mangoes: Milinda's Questions II, vi.
24 This suggests that just as a chariot cannot be equated with any one of its constituent parts but is a result of the combination of them all, so the human person cannot be found in any of its parts but only in their combination.
25 In 1850 Spence Hardy wrote: 'The recluse was taught . . . that not only the *mine* but the *me* was to be sacrificed at the ascetic altar' (Spence Hardy 1850: 141). In 1853 he echoes Gogerly and calls it an 'absurd mystery': 'We exist, and we do not exist. We die and we do not die' (Spence Hardy 1853: 389).
26 The explanation given is: '1. That every existent thing is a source of sorrow. 2. That continued sorrow results from a continued attachment to existing objects. 3. That a freedom from this attachment liberates from existence. 4. The path leading to this state containing eight sections.'
27 The first offence necessitating expulsion from the community, placed at the beginning of the *Suttavibhaṅga*, Vol. I of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.
28 *Vinaya Piṭaka*, 1, 1, 5.
29 'In his first discourse, Budha had taught his disciples, that existence and suffering are inseparably connected:- that the perpetuation of existence results from, either a continued desire to live after death, or from a desire to terminate upon death the existence of a living entity or soul:- that the only means by which a termination both of sorrow and existence may be secured, is to be entirely free from all desire to existing objects, and to existence itself:- and that this freedom from desire can only be attained by a life of unspotted purity' (Bishop 1908, I: 102).
30 J. Armour's translation of Kitulgama Devamitta's treatise. See Part 4: 182–5.
31 In the main text, the first explanation, which is not attributed to anyone, is given as '*Chaturwidha-árya-satya, or the four great Truths*.

1 Dukha-satya – By the cleaving to existence or to sensible objects, and the agitation of mind arising therefrom, are produced (1) the sorrow arising from birth, decay, and death; (2) the coming of that which is not desired; (3) the absence of that which is desired; (4) the non-reception of wealth and other things upon which the affections have been placed; (5) the five khandas, or existence as an organized being and (6) the misery of hell.
2 Dukha-samudya-satya – The three modes of existence, in the káma, rúpa and arúpa worlds, are produced by the continued cleaving to existence or to sensible objects.
3 Dukha-niródha-satya – There is no escape from the repetition of existence but by an entrance into the paths and the reception of nirwana.
4 Dukha-niródha-gámini-patipada-satya – There is no reception of nirwána but by the destruction of the cleaving to existence.'

32 For instance Gogerly translates *Dhammapada* verse 226 as, 'The passions are extinct in those, who, desiring the freedom of Nirvāna, are perpetually vigilant, keeping themselves in subjection night and day' (*Sadā jāgaramānānaṃ ahorattānusikkhinaṁ Nibbānaṁ adhimuttānaṁ atthaṁ gacchanti āsavā*) Bishop 1908, II: 288. Compare this with Norman's translation 'Of those who are always awake, learning by day and night, intent upon nibbāna, the āsavas disappear' (Norman 1997: 34).
33 *Appamādo amatapadaṁ, pamādo maccuno padaṁ, Appamattā na mīyanti, ye pamattā yathā matā*.

7 BUDDHISM'S GLORIOUS CORE: TURNOUR'S ALLIES

1 Examples of plagiarization include Sirr 1850, II: 42–56 (Davy) and Sirr 1850, II: 284–337 (Forbes).

2 See Knighton 1845a: 62; Spence Hardy 1850: 202; Turnour 1833: 274 and Yasmin Gooneratne's judgement that Forbes was among those 'sometimes able to get the better of the prejudices inculcated by religious attitudes' (Gooneratne 1968: 46).

3 For example, Marandhan, in the first dialogue, laments the take-over of the Kandyan Kingdom: 'A country enslaved – a nobility falling into the depths of servility – a religion tottering under the incessant attacks, open and secret, of that patronised by our rulers'. When Knighton suggests the British had brought benefits, Marandhan says, 'No' (Knighton 1854, I: 150).

4 *Forest Life in Ceylon* is rare among British writing for stressing the hardships of the plantation workers (Knighton 1854, I: 170–4; 1854, I: 122–3). Both an unjust judge (Knighton 1854, I: 188–93) and a planter who believes he can rightfully do anything short of killing his workers are condemned (Knighton 1854, I: 280).

5 Knighton believed Christianity would benefit Asia (Knighton 1845a: 335), but Marandhan's biography (Knighton 1854, II: 220–357) and the treatment of a Parsee, Hormanjee (Knighton 1854, I: 337–89) show he also respected the faith of others. In *Tropical Sketches* he vehemently contested that faith was only found in Christianity through sympathetic portrayals of Islam (Knighton 1855, I: 168), Sikhism (Knighton 1855, II: 18) and Hinduism (Knighton 1855, II: 79).

6 In his early work he mentions Sri Lanka's 'barbarism' before the British (Knighton 1845a: 361) and stereotypes on the basis of physical strength (Knighton 1845a: 183). Later a Mr Rivers is imaged as a benevolent British administrator but the reverse is a, 'semi-civilised population', looking on his family as 'gods upon earth' (Knighton 1854, II: 117).

7 See, for example, Knighton's description of Calcutta's streets (Knighton 1855, 1: 152) and Hormanjee's visit to London (Knighton 1854, 1: 362–81).

8 In words similar to Boake, Tennent states that Buddhism, 'is less a form of religion than a school of philosophy; and *its worship*, according to the institutes of its founders, consists of an appeal to the reason, rather than an attempt on the imagination through the instrumentality of rites and parades' (Tennent 1859, 1: 535). But this becomes an indictment, contributing to Buddhism's 'icy coldness' (Tennent 1859, 1: 538).

9 'O house-maker, you are seen. You will not make the house again. All these rafters are broken, the house-ridge is destroyed. The mind, set on the destruction (of material things), has attained the termination of the cravings' (*Dhammapada* verse 154 as translated in Norman 1997: 22).

10 Sirr's picture is inconsistent combining annihilation, mystery and absorption (1850, II: 44; 1850, II: 61; 1850, II: 78).

11 Sirr plagiarizes this five years later in: Sirr 1850, II: 79.

12 The longest selection of verses appears in Knighton 1845a. They include verses 5, 19, 21, 25, 27, 28, 33, 35, 43, 49, 50, 58/59, 76, 77, 80, 81, 100, 103, 110, 119, 123, 124, 141, 183, 222, 223, 228, 232, 235, 239, 248, 251.

13 *Sutta Nipāta* verse 258–69.

14 *Puṇṇovāda Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* III, 267–70.

15 *Upāli Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* II, 372–87, see 379 for the specific advice given to Upāli.

16 Knighton quotes the following:

> The words of Budha were never intended to cause pain. The strongest term of reproach that he ever addressed to any one was *mogha purisa*, vain man! On one occasion he reproved the priest Kalandaka-putra but it was as the physician who uses powerful medicine for the curing of his patient, or who may prescribe loathsome medicaments for the same purpose, or it was the parent, who, from affection, chastises the child. A profusion of fine cotton,

> though in size it were like a rock, might fall upon any one without his being hurt – thus lightly fell the words of Budha upon those whom he addressed.
> (Knighton 1854, II: 19–20)

17 *Sigālovāda Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya* III, 182–93; *Sālayakka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* I, 285–90.
18 See: Sirr 1850, II: 82–5, which echoes Knighton and Sirr 1850, II: 113–14, which echoes Davy.
19 An early article argues that Buddhism must predate Brahmanism (Knighton 1844: 337).
20 Knox's references to inferior gods and Buddha as saviour of souls demonstrates for Knighton that 'a comparatively pure and spiritual religion' had lost its hold on the public mind (Knighton 1845a: 290). But he admits that Knox's evidence shows that 'a remnant' of moral purity remained (Knighton 1845a: 291).

8 INTRODUCTION

1 The English version appeared in 1882: *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, trans. W. Hoey, London: Williams and Norgate.
2 Karl Eugen Neumann studied in Sri Lanka in the 1890s; Wilhelm Geiger (translator of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa*), first visited Sri Lanka in 1895 and Paul Dahlke, founder of the 'Buddhist House' in Berlin, visited in 1900 and learnt Pāli under members of the monastic Sangha.
3 The numerous books written by Carus included 1894, *The Gospel of Buddha Compiled from Ancient Records*; 1917, *Buddhism and its Christian Critics;* 1896 *Karma A Story of Early Buddhism; Primer of Philosophy;* 1891 *The Soul of Man*, all published by The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago and London. The Preface to the first is re-printed in Lopez 2002: 24–34.
4 Lillie's main publications were Lillie 1881; Lillie 1883; Lille 1887 and Lille 1893.
5 Viggo Fausböll's *Dhammapada* of 1855: a Latin translation and Turnour 1837.
6 John Ferguson was the nephew of A.M. Ferguson. In 1903, he was editor of *The Ceylon Observer*, Vice-President of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (RASCB), President of the Ceylon Christian Literature Society, Honorary Corresponding Secretary of the Royal Colonial Institute and General European Representative in the Ceylon Legislative Council.
7 Tea was replacing coffee by the 1870s because of leaf disease in coffee, leading to a resident labour force from India to meet continuous picking requirements. Coconut and rubber also became plantation crops.
8 For similar attitudes see Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 8, 13, 395 and Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 99.
9 Arriving in Sri Lanka in 1904, he resigned in 1912, partly because of his criticisms of imperialism. In his Autobiography, he explained that he had dreamed of retiring to a district like Hambantota but added, 'At the back of my mind I think I knew that this last solution was fantasy. The days of paternalism under a Dyke or Twynam were over; I had been born in an age of imperialism and I disapproved of imperialism and felt sure its days were already numbered' (Woolf 1990, I: 298). See also Gooneratne 2005.
10 See 'Romantic other, negative spin: Constance Gordon Cumming' note 6, p. 235.
11 For example, Ferguson praises the benefits of infusing 'Anglo-Saxon energy and spirit' in Asia (J. Ferguson 1883: 88) and declares that the 'Western habit of constant work does not suit the Oriental taste at all' (J. Ferguson 1893: 176).
12 Frederic William Farrar (1831–1903), born in Bombay, theologian and philologist, became Canon of Westminster Cathedral in 1876 and in 1883, Archdeacon. From 1895

until his death he was Dean of Canterbury. Theosophist C.W. Leadbeater praised his view that love and service was the heart of religion (Leadbeater 1998i: 283).

13 William Peiris, for instance, argued that Arnold wrote the poem under pressure from Henry Stanley that his sympathy for Buddhism should be balanced with a work on Christianity, and therefore was not written with conviction (W. Peiris, 1970: 78).

14 'Extract: Professor Monier Monier-Williams on the Sacred Books of the East', *CDG*, 11, 10, 15 June 1887: 115–16, here p. 116.

15 *CCJ* April 1877: 7.

16 Ceylon Letters, Volume II, letter of 11 January 1879 from Bishop Copleston giving the SPG guidelines for schools (SPG Archives).

17 *CCJ* April 1877: 7.

18 *CDG* 4 May 1878: 109.

19 See J. Ferguson 1903b for the following statistics:

	1881	*1891*	*1901*
Total no. of Christians	267,977	30,212	349,239
Percentage of population	9.71	10.04	9.80
Roman Catholics	208,000	246,214	287,419
Others	60,000	59,913	61,820

20 See Young and Somaratne 1996: 138 for reference to Mohoṭṭivattē Guṇānanda's debt to Bradlaugh's book, *The Bible: What is It?*

9 THE BUDDHA AS HERO: ARNOLD'S *THE LIGHT OF ASIA*

1 See for instance Gordon Cumming's contemporary comment,

> Surely such an ovation as was accorded to him by the Buddhists when he visited Ceylon in 1886 was doubtful honour for a Christian. At one Buddhist college near Colombo well-nigh three thousand Buddhists assembled to testify their gratitude . . . The honoured guest was placed on a raised platform beneath an honorific canopy, while Buddhist ecclesiastics robed in yellow satin chanted litanies, and anthems in Pali and Singhalese, Sir Edwin replying in Sanskrit.
>
> (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 418)

2 Of relevance here is his initiation of a campaign to gain Buddhist control over Buddhist places of pilgrimage in India, after contact with Veḷigama Sumaṃgala in 1886.

3 Evidence exists that Arnold assumed Buddhism taught a continuity of being across births in an evolutionary progression. See for example Arnold 1893: 277 (reprinted from the journal of the Mahā Bodhi Society) where he emphasized the compatibility of Darwin's evolutionary theory with Buddhism, implying that Buddhism spoke of an evolving being.

4 'Before beginning, and without an end, As space eternal and as surety sure, Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good, Only its laws endure' (Arnold 1902: 140).

5 See Arnold 1902: 121 – 'Man hath no fate except past deeds'; 1902: 138 'Within yourselves deliverance must be sought' and 1902: 143–4.

6 In other writings, Arnold affirms Buddhism's rationality. See Arnold 1893 and W. Peiris 1970: 51.

7 Arnold never publicly rejected Christianity. Buddhists have speculated that this was because he hoped to become poet laureate (W. Peiris 1970: 74). Certainly, *The Light of*

the World (on Jesus of Nazareth) lacked the energy of *The Light of Asia* and was criticized for this in his own lifetime. See for example Moscrop 1891: 390. Yet Arnold probably looked at all religions for wisdom, as shown by his other publications which included *The Song Celestial*, a poetic rendering of the *Bhagavadgītā*; *Pearls of Faith*, praising the Islamic concept of God (Guruge 1984: xlv).

10 BUDDHISM AS NIHILISM: THE MISSIONARY PERSPECTIVE

1 Favourites were Spence Hardy and Gogerly. Next were Kellogg 1885; Bishop Jonathon Titcomb 1883, the first Protestant Bishop of Rangoon and Paul A. Bigandet 1866.
2 Editorial, *TB*, XI, 1899–1890: 60.
3 In 1847, he founded the Kandy Religious Tract Society as brother to the Colombo Auxiliary Religious Tract Society. On the demise of the latter, it became the Singhalese Tract Society and in 1859 it united with the Christian Vernacular Education Society (Murdoch 1880: 368–76).
4 Letter 22, November 1873 from Jermyn to SPG Headquarters, Ceylon Letters, Vol. II, (SPG Archives).
5 Letter of 31 March 1903, Rev. J.E. Marks to Bishop Copleston, Ceylon Letters Volume II (SPG Archives). See also letter of Marks' daughter to Bishop Montgomery, Secretary of SPG, 23 September 1904, stating that her parents were ill in Ceylon with little money (Ceylon Letters Vol. II).
6 Murdoch, presents the Noble Truths as: 'Existence is suffering; The desire of existence is the origin of suffering; The destruction of this desire of existence is the destruction of suffering; The eightfold path to the destruction of suffering' (Murdoch 1887a: 48–9). Moscrop writing for children gives: 'All sorrow comes from existence; The cause of all sorrow is desire; Therefore to destroy sorrow we must destroy desire; To destroy desire we must walk the eightfold way' (Moscrop 1911: 58). See also: 'Life is full of unsatisfied desire, and therefore full of misery. Death will be no gain to us, will bring us no rest, if we are to be re-born. We should so live that all passions, all desire, even desire for existence, will be quenched' (S. Langdon 1886: 42).
7 See 1870, 'Max Muller on Nirvana,' *TF*, Second Series, I, March: 27–33 where Muller is quoted as differing from Bigandet's nihilistic view by suggesting that it was 'an entrance of the soul into rest' and freedom from rebirth.
8 See p.121.
9 *QL*, No. LXXXII, September 1873, from Mission House Colpetty: 196–201, here p. 198.
10 'Reviews and Notices' *CDG*, 16, 3, 24 March 1892: 28.
11 See also 'The glory of the Buddha at the moment he died was that he could be no more. He is dead, dead for evermore' (Moscrop 1899: 16).
12 Moscrop 1899 was first written in Sinhala as an introduction to a *Life of Christ* (Small 1965: 408). It intentionally echoed chapter 2 of Kellogg 1885, a book that sought to counter Western sympathy for Buddhism (Kellogg 1885: vi) and that ridiculed the reliability of the Buddha biography (Kellogg 1885: 53). Among Moscrop's hackneyed arguments are the following: reliable biographies do not exist; no historical writings contemporary to the Buddha are available; eminent scholars feel the tradition of the First Council must be rejected and we can be sure of nothing earlier than 100–150 years after the Buddha's death.
13 For a further example of this approach see M, S.A. 1885 (an article signed S.A.M.), in which the Buddha is credited with a 'wonderful personal magnetism' but also with preaching only 'a great capital I' (p.179). For another veiled missionary attack on Arnold see Anon. 1886, which was probably written by Langdon as editor of *CF*.

14 See also Jones 1896, which accuses Buddhist monks of being, 'some of the leaders of the enemy's garrison' and the people as being bound by Satan.
15 The *Monthly Literary Register* (*MLR*) of 1894 and 1895 contained a significant collection of letters concerning demon worship in response to a challenge by A.E. Buultjens to Bishop Copleston (Buultjens 1894) concerning the relationship between demon worship and Buddhism, seen in Copleston 1894. A writer from Negombo stated that 'there is scarcely any pure Buddhism' (*MLR* II, 12, December 1894: 276) while another insisted that demon worship was not 'mixed up with Buddhism' (*MLR* II, 12, December 1894: 278). Letter XIII from Sabaragamuwa read,

> Buddhism in itself is like a dead corpse, and it cannot be revived but, with the spirit of the devil which pervades all throughout the feelings, actions and movements of the Buddhists, who are forced by circumstances to resort to some superhuman power when in distress as the founder of their creed it is only a name and a phantom.
>
> (*MLR* III, 1, January 1895: 11)

16 See Cracknell 1995: 107–80, which focuses on missionaries sympathetic to the religions they worked among, for example: Robert Hume, India; Arthur Lloyd, Japan; Timothy Richard, China and F.W.S. O'Neill, China.

11 ROMANTIC OTHER, NEGATIVE SPIN: CONSTANCE GORDON CUMMING

1 See Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 24 when she is told by a group of Buddhist monks that she has earned great merit, because of her sketches of sacred places. Three hundred of her water colours were exhibited in the Indian and Colonial Exhibition (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 4–5).
2 She can speak authoritatively of the Rodiyas (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 99), the history of relics in Christianity (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 322), the British attitude to Sri Lanka's ancient tanks (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 356) and the effect of the Gem Ordinance (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 19).
3 See her scrambling over rocks to reach a temple (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 36), rowing when another refuses for caste reasons (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 97) and climbing Sri Pada against male disbelief (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 324).
4 Gogerly and Spence Hardy (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 289); Knox, Forbes and Spence Hardy (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 300–1); Tennent (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 386) and Skinner, Hoffmeister and Baker (Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 217).
5 See letter from Bishop Jermyn to SPG Headquarters, 26 February 1873, referring to 'dead Buddhism', Ceylon Letters, Vol. 2 (SPG Archives).
6 Augusta Klein visited Sri Lanka on her way to India, with her father and sisters. The monastic Sangha (Klein 1895: 23) and Buddhist devotion (Klein 1895:28) fascinate her. She avoids praising Buddhist beliefs and is mildly critical of Western Buddhists. Helen Ford, educated and independent, preferred facts to eulogy. Ford and her companion tell Sri Lankan Buddhists that they are flouting their founders' teaching by worshipping Hindu gods (Ford 1889: 133,144).
7 For further information about this Riot, see Somaratne 1991.
8 See in addition Gordon Cumming 1892, I: 52, 180, 244.
9 Missionaries and Christian institutions mentioned include Eliza Agnew in Jaffna (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 360); The Wesleyan Methodist Mission including Samuel Langdon's work in Uva (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 29–35, 387–8) and CMS and SPG (Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 392–416).

10 On ethics see also Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 123, 420–2. For her lamenting the difference between precept and practice see Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 26, 97 and for her coverage of Sri Lankan criminality see Gordon Cumming 1892, II: 253.

12 BUDDHISM AS LIFE-AFFIRMING: CONTESTING THE MISSIONARIES

1 For example, in Childers: 'sanctification' of the *arahat*, 'sin' as the cause of existence, 'original sin' as being banished by the *arahat*. Dickson, in his translation of the *Pātimokkha*, referred to 'Lord', 'Deacon', 'Priest' and 'commands', terms that are changed through footnotes by Piyadassi Thero in 1963. See Piyadassi 1963.
2 The *Sigālovāda Sutta* concentrates on lay ethics, most particularly the rights and duties involved in family and social relationships (*Dīgha Nikāya*, III: 180–93).
3 Named in the Dictionary Preface are three Sinhala Buddhists: 'the priest Dhammârâma of Yâtrâmullê', 'Subhûti of Vaskaduvê'; 'the Mudliar L Corneille Vijêsimha' (Childers 1909: xvii).
4 See for example the credits given in Childers 1909 for the definitions (using standardized spelling) of: *anattā* (p. 32), *bhāvanā* (p. 85), *upādāna* (p. 525), *kamma* (p. 177–9), *karunā* (p. 190) and *nibbāna* (p. 265–74).
5 *Saṅgīti Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*, III: 219.
6 These are the ten *kasiṇa* (external objects to concentrate the mind). Traditionally these are earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, space and consciousness.
7 The *Nidhikaṇda Sutta* is from the *Khuddakapāṭha* (*Khuddaka Nikāya*). The last three texts are found in the *Sutta Nipāta, (Khuddaka Nikāya*): *Mahāmaṅgala Sutta* (verses 258–69); *Ratana Sutta* (verses 222–38); *Mettā Sutta* (verses 143–52).

13 CONTRASTING SCHOLARS: R.S. COPLESTON AND T.W. RHYS DAVIDS

1 In 1879 the CMS clergy refused the Eucharist at the Cathedral because of Copleston's attitude to the positioning of the altar (*CDG*, 3, 6, 8 February 1879: 69–71; *CDG*, 3, 8, 5 April 1879: 92–3). It was settled by the mediation of English Bishops in 1880.
2 See also *SPG Report* 1879: 38–41, where Copleston says to SPG supporters 'Buddhism is not like Christianity in either theory or in practice. In theory, if like Christianity at all, it is like Christianity without a Creator, without an Atoner, without a Sancitifier; in practice it is a thin veil of flower-offering and rice-giving over a very real and degraded superstition of astrology and devil worship' (p. 40).
3 *CDG*, 2 March 1878: 85 where Copleston in effect excommunicates those who have married 'unbelievers'.
4 'Bishop Copleston and the Anuradhapura Bo-Tree', *MLR*, New Series, II, 8, September 1894: 213.
5 See Upham 1829: 27–8, 62, 101–2; Knighton 1844 where he argues that Pythagorean philosophy is a resumé of Buddhism; Knighton 1845a: 4, 31, 196; Spence Hardy 1850: 353 which argues that the Spartan movement may have links with India; Spence Hardy 1853: 8–10, 27, 34 and Spence Hardy 1866: lii.
6 ' "Bishop Copleston on 'Buddhism": A Review from a Sinhalese Buddhist', *TB*, 5, 11, 17 March 1893: 81–3.
7 For an interesting commentary on the first 12 years of the Society see Rhys Davids' second American Lecture (Rhys Davids 1896: 81).
8 Among these were Mrs C.F. Rhys Davids, J. Minayeff, E. Muller, H.C. Norman, Vicco Fausböll, William Geiger, Robert Chalmers, Edward Thomas, William Stede, Hermann Oldenberg and Frank Lee Woodward.

9 When asked in America whether he was a Buddhist, Rhys Davids uses avoidance: 'I am a student for the sake of the knowledge of my fellow men. A man who tells the world something that it never knew before accomplishes more than any man who succeeds in making millions of dollars.' When asked if he was a Christian, he replied, 'All Englishmen are born into the Established Church, are we not?' ('To Lecture on Buddhism', an article on Rhys Davids taken from the *New York Sun*, *TB*, VII, 10, 22 March 1895: 73–4, here p.74). See also note 20.

10 *TB*, I, 11: 62.

11 These included the Sanskrit *Lalita Vistara* [graceful description], Tibetan accounts analysed by Alexander Csomo de Köros, Spence Hardy (1853), the Pāli text of the Commentary on the *Jātaka*, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, Bigandet (1866) and Beal (1875).

12 For example de Bunsen 1880; Professor Seydel (1882) *Das Evangelium von Jesu in seinen Verhaltnissen zu Buddha Sage and Buddha Lehre*, Leipzig: Druck and Verlag von Breit kopfund und Härtel.

13 *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, Saṁyutta Nikāya*, V, 420–4.

14 Among the texts used by Rhys Davids to illustrate *nibbāna* were *Dhaniya Sutta* (*Sutta Nipāta*: 18–34), *Uṭṭhāna Sutta* (*Sutta Nipāta*, 331–4), *Dhammapada* (verses 197–200), *Milinda*' s *Questions* II: 195–201, 271–3 and *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* II: 119–20) (Rhys Davids 1896: 167–80).

15 Reference is made to the following texts: *Kassapa Sīhināda Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya* I: 169; *Tevijja Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya* I: 250–1; *Mettā Sutta, Sutta Nipāta* I: 49–51; *Dhammapada* verses 4 and 5: the story of Dighayu in *Vinaya* IV (*Mahāvagga)*: 342–8; *Aṅguttara Nikāya* II: 71–2: radiating loving kindness to snakes.

16 The texts quoted include the following: *Maṅgala Sutta, Sutta Nipāta*: 258–69: *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta, Kuddakapāṭha* VIII; *Dhammapada* – 28 non-consecutive verses; *Sigālovāda Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya* III: 180–92; and the following *suttas* from the *Sutta Nipāta: Vasala Sutta; Amagandha Sutta; Kiṁsila Sutta; Uṭṭhāna Sutta; Kasibhāradvāja Sutta; Dhammika Sutta* (Rhys Davids 1894: 124–49).

17 Also declared to be false are the supernatural powers attained by *iddhi*; the size, age and first cause of the cosmos and the omniscience of the Buddha (Rhys Davids 1894: 101).

18 As the crested (peacock) with blue neck never attains the speed of the goose (when) going through the sky, so a householder does not equal a bhikkhu, a sage (who is) apart, meditating in the wood (*Sutta Nipāta*: 221).

19 See Buultjens 1894 for criticism of Copleston's view that villagers knew little Buddhist doctrine.

20 This paragraph includes:

> For – and here we come to the gist of the matter – it is precisely those ideas in the Bible which are most instinctively and specially Christian, which are not only wanting in, but *are absolutely contradicted in, Buddhism*. In it we have an ethical system but no lawgiver, a world without a Creator, *a salvation without eternal life*, and a sense of evil, but *no conception of pardon, atonement, reconciliation and redemption*... The Buddhist reverences the Buddha as the best and the wisest of men, the king of righteousness who has led the way to victory. But the Christian worships the Son of God, who is at the same time the Son of Man, the Divine Man, with that unspeakable love and adoration which are due to Him for His incarnation and atoning death upon the cross.
>
> (Rhys Davids 1887: 131–2)

21 Cox 1998 gives an interesting perspective on such questions of identity.

14 BALANCING THE EXOTERIC AND THE ESOTERIC: THEOSOPHISTS IN SRI LANKA

1 F.L. Woodward and Elizabeth Preston were two British theosophists who worked in Sri Lanka. See the Epilogue for information about Woodward. Preston worked at the Buddhist girls' school, Musaeus College from 1918 and founded Alethea School, Wellawatte in 1928 (Jayawardena 1991: 17). See Jayawardena 1992 and Jayawardena 1995: 114–22 for a linking of theosophy with progressive women's movements.

2 By 1881 the objects of the Theosophical Society, were as follows:

> To form the Nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity; to Study Aryan literature, religion and science; to vindicate the importance of this enquiry and correct misrepresentations with which it has been clouded; to explore the hidden mysteries of Nature and the latent powers of Man, on which the Founders believe that Oriental Philosophy is in a position to throw light.
>
> (Tillett 1982: 28)

3 For information about Piyaratana see Guruge 1984: 335–7; Malalgoda 1976: 164–5, 234 and Young and Somaratne 1996: 90, 152, 201.

4 Olcott wrote on 29 August 1878 from New York,

> I pass among ignorant Western people as a tolerably well impressed man, but in comparison with learning possessed by my Brothers in the Oriental priesthood I am as ignorant as the last of their neophytes. What I call wisdom is the thorough knowledge of the real truth of the Cosmos and of man. Where in Christendom can this be learnt? Where is the University, Where the Professor, where the books from which or whom the hungry student may discover what lies behind the shell of physical nature? That divine knowledge is alone in the keeping of temples and priests and ascetics of the East, despised Heathendom.
>
> (As copied by the author from records held at Sailabimbarama Temple in Dodanduva)

See also Guruge 1984; 338 and Young and Somaratne 1996: 201.

5 For an account of Besant's life movement, see Jayawardena 1995:123–34.

6 See Tillett 1982: 316 ff. for an exhaustive list of Leadbeater's publications.

7 I am indebted to Tessa Bartholomeusz for the following references from the Anagārika Dharmapāla's diaries: 16 November 1889 – 'CWL is charged with kidnapping the son of C D Hendrick'; 21 November 1889 'General Meeting of the Theosophical Society – CWL's departure and the kidnapping of the boy by him discussed at the meeting. Resolved to take measures to stop the scandal being public.' The diaries are held at the Maha Bodhi Society, Colombo.

8 See Young and Somaratne 1996: 85–7, 89–90, 144–7 for information about the contested question of the Buddha's omniscience at this time.

9 See for instance Anderson 1889: 253.

10 Editorial Comment on Criticisms of Buddhism by Sir Monier Monier-Williams (*TB*, I. 38, 6 September 1889: 304).

11 Sinnett divided the 'Perfect Man' into Body (Rupa); Vitality (Prana or Jiva); Astral Body (Linga Sharira); Animal Soul (Kama Rupa); Human Soul (Manas); Spiritual Soul (Buddhi) and Spirit (Atma). The last four principles belonged to a human's higher nature (Sinnett 1903: 22–33).

12 See for example Leadbeater's editorial insertion of, 'the individuality perhaps?' after *'karma'* in the following sentence about *nibbāna*: 'The soul, the *karma*, is not extinguished, but only freed from the chain of existences – at rest, merged in the All-Soul'

(Leuders 1889: 203); Leadbeater's linkage of the first fetter, the 'I am I' consciousness, with the 'personality' (Leadbeater 1889c: 241).

13 Trainor suggests that the Anagārika Dharmapāla broke with Olcott because Olcott showed disrespect to the tooth relic (Trainor 1997: 15). See also Young and Somaratne 1996: 198–226 on the soured relationship between the theosophists and revivalist monks.

14 For example, 'Hymn for Use in Buddhist Schools' the first verse of which was: 'Come ye Buddhist people, Up and let us sing, Hymns of praise and glory, To our Lord and King. Oft as men exulting, Waft his praise on high, Deva-hosts rejoicing, Make their glad reply (*TB*, 1, 35: 279).

15 'Arrival of Mr Charles F. Powell', *TB*, 1, 34: 270–1.

16 Leadbeater, for instance, expresses surprise that a reader asks what occultism is, when the higher teachings of Buddhism, 'simply were Occultism pure and simple' (Leadbeater 1889g: 52).

17 See for example Murdoch 1887a: 14; words by a W.W. that express surprise that theosophists 'take no step whatsoever to put a stop to these evil practices[devil worship]' (*CDG*, 9, 5, 1891: 51). For instances of Buddhist-theosophist friction see accusations against Holly by A. Aryadhamma in 'Caste', *TB*, 1, 39: 309–10; Malalgoda 1976: 252–5 and Young and Somaratne 1996: 198–226.

18 See also L.A. Wickremeratne 1976.

15 CONVERT TO COMPASSION: ALLAN BENNETT

1 Crowley's relationship with Bennett began when both were interested in occult mysticism, and petered out when Bennett became a convinced Buddhist. Pereira met Bennett in 1900 and the friendship lasted a lifetime. Together with the Venerable Narada, Dr W.A. de Silva and Hema Basnayake, Pereira founded the *Servants of the Buddha* in 1921 to provide a discussion forum for English-speaking Buddhists. At 65 years he was ordained as the Venerable Kassapa. His father built Maithriya Hall, Bambalapitiya (Colombo) named after Ananda Metteyya.

2 Crowley claimed that he was known all over London 'as the one Magician who could really do big-time stuff' (Grant 1972: 85), which included using a wand to render motionless a sceptic who doubted its power (Symonds and Grant 1989: 180).

3 Pereira later wrote that he had thought all Bennett had taught him about meditation at that time was Buddhist but later realized that it also contained, 'mystic Christian, Western "occult" and Hindu sources' (Pereira 1947: 67).

4 In the late 1880s, the remedies prescribed by doctors for asthma included cocaine, opium and morphine. Bennett was heavily dependent on them (Symonds and Grant 1989: 180). See James Adam 1913, which advises the use of cocaine and, with restrictions, morphine; A.C. Wootton 1910, which affirms the beneficial effects of laudanum, an opium-based drug; Thorowgood 1894, which recommends arsenical cigarettes, cocaine, cannabis, and morphine together with less toxic drugs.

5 Ananda Metteyya became General Secretary, with Dr E.R. Rost, a Western convert to Buddhism and member of the Indian Medical Service, the Honorary Secretary. For further information about Rost see Humphreys 1968: 3–5.

6 Editorial comment, *Buddhism* 1, 3 March 1904: 473.

7 *BR*, I, 1909: 3.

8 Pereira gives no date for this. See Harris 1998: 14.

9 *BR*, 8, 1916: 217–9.

10 No gravestone has ever been placed on Allan Bennett's grave, perhaps because suspicions concerning his link with esotericism continued. See Harris 1998: 17.

11 In Sri Lanka, the traditional threefold classification is: *dāna, sīla, bhāvanā* (giving, morality, meditation). Ananda Metteyya describes his classification, *sīla, dāna, bhāvanā*, as: avoiding evil, charity, meditation.

12 See also Bennett 1923: 94.
13 A 1904 editorial by Ananda Metteyya had commended the war between Japan and Russia as the fight of Japan, a Buddhist power, against 'the most ruthless of the Christian powers' (*Buddhism*, I, 4: 649).
14 He added at the end:

> These facts, we consider, justify us in our conclusion that in the extension of this great Teaching lies not only the solution of the ever-growing religious problems of the West; but even, perhaps, the only possible deliverance of the western civilization from that condition of fundamental instability which now so obviously and increasingly prevails.
>
> (Bennett 1920b: 187)

16 THE BRITISH AS WITNESSES TO THE TRADITION: CONTINUITY AND RUPTION

1 See: *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Landern des Theravada Buddhismus*, 1, Frankfurt and Berlin: Alfred Metzner, 1966; 2 and 3, Wiesbaden, 1967 and 1973, quoted in Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988: 6.
2 Gombrich has argued that the Buddha's message was largely 'Protestant' and that the nineteenth century widened the scope of this giving birth to a dual economy of the spirit (Gombrich 1993).
3 See for example Hawkins' claim that the counter-attack against Christianity in Sri Lanka started when Olcott arrived (Hawkins 1999: 5); Lopez's implication that 'modern Buddhism' began in Sri Lanka with the Panadura Debate and the arrival of Olcott (Lopez 2002: vii–xviii).
4 See Malalgoda 1976 and particularly Malalgoda 1997 where Malalgoda cites the word *sāsana* (dispensation of the Buddha) to prove that Buddhists in Sri Lanka have possessed a sophisticated concept of religious identity, contesting the view that they only began to see themselves as Buddhist in response to Western labelling. See also King 1999: 143–4.
5 Here I use Sweetman's study of British representations of Hinduism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century India (Sweetman 2003: 27–30), particularly his stress on 'attention' as a key factor in the 'mapping' of a religion.
6 'What are the good objects to meditate on? – the impermanent nature of happiness and sorrow; the good actions that we can do; and how we can obtain nirvāna.' (Leadbeater 1889a: 10, Part I, Q. 83)

17 THE ROOTS OF BUDDHIST MODERNISM

1 Parallels to this can be found in India, e.g. Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) (Sweetman 2003: 104–26).
2 'Questions and Answers Regarding the Religion of the Kandyans', Jale No. 3/3/2/229/95, Department of National Archives, Colombo.
3 Concerning Rajapakse, see the Postscript to Turnour 1833 where Turnour questions Rajapakse's competence in Pāli and English, while nevertheless stressing his uprightness of character (Turnour 1833: 285). There is no mention of his competence in Sinhala and Dutch, which would have been more important.
4 See Chapter 18, note 4.
5 See also Upham 1833, III: 138.
6 In Hoogewoud's translation, the question is 'Is the human soul immortal? (Q. 4 in Section 15), almost a repeat of Question 2. In *TF* it is Question LXIII: Is the soul deathless? (Spence Hardy 1842: 109).

7 The translation and Spence Hardy's interpretation (in brackets) is as follows:

1 dukha-satya (that sorrow exists among all beings, there is no form of existence in which sorrow is not endured);
2 samudaya-satya (that sorrow is produced by an attachment to existing objects, or to sensuality, taking the word in its literal sense, and not restricting it to licentiousness);
3 nirodha-satya (that there is no release from this attachment but by the extinction of existence);
4 margga-satya (the extinction of existence cannot be effected but by the 4 paths and their 4 accompanying consequences and rewards).

(Spence Hardy 1842: 228)

8 On the evidence of some of the Falck documents Copleston declares that the theory of Buddhism 'as held by the natives of Ceylon before European scholars knew anything about it' does not appear to differ considerably from what Western scholars were now discovering (Copleston 1892: 421).

18 ONE TRADITION, DIFFERING VOICES

1 Forbes describes John Armour as the 'best Cingalese and English scholar in Ceylon' (Forbes 1841: 198n). Turnour praises him for his attainments in Sinhala and 'his long intercourse with the Kandyan priests' (Turnour 1836: 79).
2 For instance, he wrote *Kiralasandēsaya* (The Message of the Lapwing) which was supportive of Ähälēpola, the Kandyan aristocrat who aided the British conquest of the Kingdom.
3 It is presented by Upham as a 'Translation of A Cingalese Compendious Description of the Budhist Doctrine and of the Edification of the Famous Pagoda upon Adams Peak, denominated Mulgirri – Galle sent on 3 December 1766 to His Excellency Honourable Imam Willem Falck', who requested it of the Chief Priest of Mulgirigala, 'Sue Bandare Metankere Samanere Samewahanse' (Upham 1833, III: 81).
4 See for instance Knighton 1844: 11–18; Knighton 1845a: 68, 73 and Forbes 1841, I: 307; II: 197–8.
5 See for example Mayor referring to the subtlety of the objections against Christianity voiced by members of the monastic Sangha (*CMS Report* 1819–1820: 190); Bisset referring to Sangha members in Kandy being 'deeply learned in their own language' (*CMS Report* 1818–1819: 188); Claughton saying that uneducated native clergy, 'will not cope with the highly educated Buddhist scholar' (Claughton 13 January 1863 to SPG Headquarters, Pascoe and Selected Letters Vol. I, SPG Archives).

19 THREAT TO THE DHAMMA, A DHAMMA RENEWED

1 See for example Lopez's surveys of the textualist task undertaken in European academies in the nineteenth century and how twentieth-century scholars such as Said and Almond have represented it (Lopez 1995: 1–13).
2 Apart from 'scripturalism', Bond names the following six themes: rationalism and individualism; world affirmation; universalism, minimization of heirarchy; devaluing of meditation and ritual; an achievement-centred orientation and this worldly asceticism (Bond 1988: 35).
3 Of the celebrations in 1889, Leadbeater wrote: 'The number of carolling parties were greater than ever before; indeed it seems to increase steadily every year, and on this occasion it is said that more than forty parties applied for carol licenses' (*TB*, I, 1889n: 172–4).

4 Buultjens 1894: 273. An editorial reply to Buultjens pointed out that the census returns showed no female dancers from the Hindu north and only two from the East (Buultjens 1894: 272). Buultjens sought to challenge this (1894: 274).

20 CO-EXISTENCE AND DUAL BELONGING

1 I accessed this letter at Methodist Church House, London. It will now be available at the MMS Archives, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
2 For a report of a missionary school opened in a '*bana maduwa*' (preaching hall in a Buddhist temple) and to Christian worship being allowed there see a description of Browning's work in the Kandy District (Church Missionary Society (CMS) Report 1824–1825: 150).
3 Buchanan writes that he has never heard of any Buddhist *'Răhāns*' hindering 'any man from worshipping God in whatever manner he thought proper: we every where saw tolerated the church, the mosque and the pagoda'. But he nevertheless includes in his compilation a Burmese treatise aimed at 'converting the Christians' (Buchanan 1799: 166).
4 For further examples of a willingness to welcome missionaries see a report from Browning of both suspicion and 'pleasure' (*CMS Report* 1824–1825: 149) and Selkirk, 1844: 423.
5 See comment on Lambrick's work in Cotta (*CMS Report* 1823–1824: 163). See also Ward referring to the blending together of Buddhism and Christianity (*CMS Report* 1822–1823: 177); Mayor claiming everyone is glad to receive missionaries, 'not that they have renounced Buddhism, or the worship of Devils . . . But they have a sort of respect for religious ceremonies; and, while they believe our religion to be a good one, they still regard their own as good also' (*CMS Report* 1823–1824: 169).
6 Bishop Chapman May 1846, Ceylon Letters Vol. 1 (SPG Archives).
7 Rev. A. Vethacan about preaching in Colombo to a crowd that might also have included Hindus and Muslims (*SPG Report* 1880: 44). See also Rev. E.T. Higgins speaking of crowds 'listening earnestly, eagerly taking our tracts and leaflets in their own language' and buying scriptures (*CMS Report* 1892–1893: 168).
8 *CMS Report* 1858–1859: 156. See also Bishop Claughton's letter of 8 July 1863 to Rev. E. Hawkins which states that the Sinhala people have been accustomed to hearing Christianity and not embracing it (Ceylon Letters, Vol. II, SPG Archives); SPG-supported missionary, Ondaatje, Report to SPG, 1852 (SPG Archives, O/IND/COL 2) and report from William Oakley (*Church Missionary Gleaner* (*CMG*) 1853: 3).

21 WORLD VIEWS IN COLLISION

1 See for instance letter from Rev. E Mooyart, 12 August 1843, to SPG (SPG Archives, O/IND/COL 2) and Valentia commenting on the loose ties of the Sinhala people to their religion (Valentia 1809, I: 308).
2 For more examples of the 'dialogues' that took place see *CMS Report* 1821–1822: 326–7 and Selkirk 1844: 469.
3 See Clough's words, 'We think some effectual means should be tried to subvert or expose the whole system' (Clough 1816b: 398).
4 For examples of Buddhist monks making objections to Christianity see *CMS Report* 1818–1819: 342–3 and 1819–1820: 190.
5 For further comment on the Kelaniya incident see Young and Somaratne 1996: 61; Coplans 1980: 100–14 and Karunaratne 1999: 12.
6 Oakley added, 'But the press continued its work, and as many as 15,000 tracts were issued from it in the course of one year' (Oakley 1880: 322).

22 BETRAYAL AND RETALIATION

1 *CMS Report* 1824–1825: 151.
2 For instance *CMS Report* 1824–1825: 151 and the reference to members of the monastic Sangha meeting to 'consider what are the best modes to be adopted to put the Press down' (at Cotta near Colombo) (*CMS Report* 1832–1833: 55).
3 See also the record of an exchange of tracts that occurred between Methodist missionaries and Buddhists in Kelaniya in 1826 (Coplans 1980: 104–7).
4 For example Oakley in Kandy speaking of Buddhism's sway over the people becoming weaker (CMS Report 1852–1853: 137–8); triumphalism at the decline of Buddhism (*CMS Report* 1856–1857: 149).
5 *CMS Report* 1862–1863: 168.
6 *CMS Report* 1867–1868: 158–9.
7 A report from a Mr Goonesekere in Baddegama about the southern coastal areas (*CMS Report* 1860–1861: 158).
8 See for example Philip Marks describing lay pressure on monks trying to close an English medium school (*The Mission Field*, 1871: 266).
9 See also a Kandyan Buddhist weeping because a child is learning to overthrow Buddhism (Selkirk 1844: 209).
10 See, for instance, Rev. J. Thurston, SPG missionary, reporting in 1853 that some Colombo converts realized God 'will accept no divided service from his worshippers' (O/IND/COL 2: Reports from SPG Missionaries: Thurston); Oakley in Kandy claiming most Christian families have 'entirely relinquished idolatry' (*CMS Report* 1841–1842: 83).
11 From O.J. Gunasekera, writing from Galkisse [Mount Lavinia] (*Extracts from Quarterly Letters Addressed to the Secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society by Ministers of the South Ceylon District* (Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo) (*QL*), No. LXI, March 1867: 10–11, here p. 10). See also letter of Z. Nathanialsz from Ambalangoda (*QL*, No. LXXVII, 20 June 1871: 138–41); a Sinhala catechist, W.W., vying with Spence Hardy's style (*Ceylon Diocesan Gazette* (*CDG*), 14, 1889: 41–2); a native catechist reported as condemning Buddhism as 'a masterpiece of Satan's cunning' (*CMS Report* 1877–1878: 168) and Selkirk 1844: 364, 374.
12 Buultjens refers to Bowles Daly's 'choleric and irascible temper' (Buultjens 1894: 273).
13 See p. 106.
14 South Ceylon District Minute Book, January 1882 (Methodist Church Headquarters, Colombo). See also William Rigby, Methodist missionary from 1884–1917, who wrote that every 'right-thinking Christian man would bid them [Buddhists] God-speed' in their new enthusiasm for education (*The Ceylon Friend* (*CF*), March 1891: 213–14).
15 Rev. Geoffrey Baugh, *QL*, from Galle, No. LVI, April 1865: 17–22, here p. 18.
16 For example a native catechist reported as saying that the Buddhists were put 'to utter confusion' (*CMS Report* 1873–1874: 163).
17 'That controversial clash', D.C. Ranatunga, *The Sunday Times Plus*, 24 August 2003: 9.
18 'Do please, do Mr Observer leave off prejudice, and let us take counsel together as to the relative merits of the two systems of religion' (Leadbeater 1889l: 396–7).
19 'That religion [Christianity] may work well enough in Europe, but here it has simply been an unmitigated curse, and this island would have been far happier and more moral if no missionary had ever polluted the soil with his unwelcome foot' (Leadbeater 1889o: 308).

23 THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

1 Both Sir William Gregory, Governor from 1872–1877, and Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, 1883–1890, strove for this. See, for example, Gregory 1894: 287–8.
2 I take my material from Amunugama 1979.

3 Section 29 (2) (b) and (c). For comment see K.M. De Silva 1981: 490.
4 For example 'Make Buddhism State Religion – Akmeemana MP', *The Observer*, 3 September 1962: 7; 'The Govt. has no intention of making Buddhism the State Religion', *The Observer*, 28 December 1964: 3.
5 26 August 1958 – name of paper not visible, Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Archives, file on Buddhism.
6 *Daily News*, 1 May 1962: 9.
7 *The Times*, 1 April 1960: 7.
8 *The Observer*, 2 June 1961: 3.
9 *Daily News*, 12 March 1962: 5.
10 8 July 1963 – name of paper not visible, Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Archives, file on Buddhism.
11 The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act was given its second reading in July 1979 and was inspired by the British Prevention of Terrorism Act. For an analysis of the consequences of this Act see Hoole 2001.
12 See also Roberts 2002, a study of the Sinhala language and alterity; Hoole 2001 and A. Wickremeratne 1995 in its analysis of how 'a single nation could have evolved with two minds' (p. 48).
13 Pieris claimed that the Pope had misrepresented Buddhism, 'to the point of caricaturing it' through inadequate knowledge. He continued, 'I am sure this particular Pope who was courageous enough to revisit the case of Galileo, will not find it difficult to acknowledge his mistake and offer an apology to the International Buddhist community' (*The Sunday Times*, 25 December 1994: 23).
14 Eymard de Silva Wijeratne, 'Papal Blunder, what?', *The Sunday Times*, 11 December 1994: 31.
15 Aquila Peiris, 'Buddha's Doctrine: is it godless?', *The Sunday Times*, 18 December 1994: 27.
16 'Catholic Church has high regard for Buddhist way of life', *The Sunday Island*, 8 January 1995: 1.
17 Editorial, *The Sunday Times*, 22 January 1995: 8.
18 Ravi Ranawake, 'Pope Paul II, a Buddhist Loves You', *The Sunday Times*, 12 February 1995.
19 See 'More facts about the LeGoc Memorial', *Morning Times*, 17 December 1957; 'P.M. to mediate in memorial dispute' *Daily News*, 17 December 1957 and Harris 2000: 355.
20 See, for example, 'The threat to the Government and to Buddhism from Catholic Action was much worse than the Indian problem' (Akmeemana MP, 'Make Buddhism State Religion', *The Observer*, 3 September 1962: 7). Catholic Action in fact was a generic term used in the mid-twentieth century to denote organized religious activity of a social, educational and quasi-political kind on the part of the laity.
21 See also: 'Conversion and Social Destabilisation', *The Island*, 26 June 1994: 13.
22 The first was gazetted on 28 May 2004 as a bill 'to provide for prohibition of conversion from one religion to another by use of force or allurement or by fraudulent means'. The Supreme Court declared in August 2004 that it violated clauses in the constitution concerning freedom of speech and belief and that it could only be passed through a constitutional amendment. The second, billed as an Act for the Protection of Religious Freedom, declares, 'no person shall convert or attempt to convert another person to another religion, and no person shall provide assistance or encouragement towards such conversion to another religion.'
23 For example, Holger Kersten (1986), *Jesus Lived in India*, Shaftesbury: Element Books – cited in The National Joint Committee 2001: 5, 6.
24 Quote taken from their 2003 advocacy pamphlet. See www.damrivi.net
25 'Buddhist and Christian leaders take common stand on forced or subtle conversion,' *Daily News*, 15 November 1993.

26 ‘Buddhist prelate at church opening’, *Daily News*, 27 August 1957: 7.
27 ‘Buddhists, Methodists plea for amity’, *Daily News*, 14 July 1958: 3.
28 See, for example, The Rev. Lynn A. de Silva ‘The Christian Attitude to Buddhism’, *Ceylon Daily News*, 2 Aug 1966: 6 quoted in Harris 2000: 359. His publications included (all published by the Study Centre for Religion and Society, Colombo, which became the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue): 1968, *Reincarnation in Buddhist and Christian Thought*; 1974 *Buddhism: Beliefs and Practices in Sri Lanka* and 1975, *The Problem of Self in Buddhism and Christianity*.
29 Tissa Balasuriya, ‘Buddhism and Christianity’, *Ceylon Daily News*, 11 May 1969, quoted in Harris 2000: 360. The media controversy this produced was brought together in: G.S.B. Senanayake (ed.), *Buddhist Christian Dialogue: A Controversy*, Colombo: Centre for Society and Religion.
30 See A. Pieris 1988. See also Harris 2002.

EPILOGUE

1 An Order of *Bhikkhuṇīs* existed in Sri Lanka until the eleventh century CE, after which it lapsed. Only Copleston of my writers mentions female mendicants, describing them as individuals dressed in dirty white (Copleston 1892: 471–2). As the twentieth century opened, Catherine de Alwis, an educated Sri Lankan, travelled to Myanmar to be ordained into an Order of nuns who followed ten precepts. She became Sr Sudharmācārī and, on return to Sri Lanka, formed an Order of *Sil Mātās*. I am indebted to Tessa Bartholomeusz for pointing me to Woolf’s connection with this. See Bartholomeusz 1994: 91–107 for a detailed description of this period of women’s monastic history.
2 These riots were directed towards the Muslims, most particularly the ‘Coast Moors’, who were involved in trading practices that some Sinhala people saw as unjust. The British authorities over-reacted. See K.M. de Silva 1981: 381–5.
3 See Batchelor 1994: 307–8; Lai and Von Bruck 2001: 159 and Nynaponika Thera 1978: 1–16. Most of his writings/translations are available from the Buddhist Publication Society (BPS), Kandy, Sri Lanka, in revised editions: *The Word of the Buddha: An Outline of the Buddha’s Teaching in the Words of the Pali Canon*; *The Buddha’s Path to Deliverance: A Systematic Exposition in the Words of the Sutta Pitaka*; *Buddhist Dictionary*; and *Guide through the Abhidhamma Pitaka*.
4 Writings of Nyanaponika still available include *The Vision of the Dhamma*: *Buddhist Writings of Nyanaponika Thera*, London: Rider 1986 and Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1994; and *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: A handbook of mental training based on the Buddha’s way of mindfulness*, London: Rider, 1962 (and BPS 1962). Biographical material can be found in Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995 and 2001 and Lai and Von Bruck, 2001: 160.
5 Ven. Ayya Khema was ordained a *Sil Mātā* but later took higher ordination in 1998 in the USA. She published widely e.g. *Being Nobody, Going Nowhere: Meditations on the Buddhist Path*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1993.
6 For further information on Silācārā see W. Peiris 1973: 62–3; Batchelor 1994: 314–16; Harris 1998: 13–14.
7 For instance, he translated into English for the Pali Text Society: the *Khuddakapātha and Commentary* (1960), the *Nettipakaraṇa* (1962), the *Peṭakopadesa* (1964), the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (1982) and the *Vibhaṅga Commentary*. All remain on the List of Issues, some having undergone revision. For the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, he translated *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga: The Classic Manual of Buddhist Doctrine and Meditation* (1956; republished 1991).
8 *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pali Canon*, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society (1972, republished 1992).

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